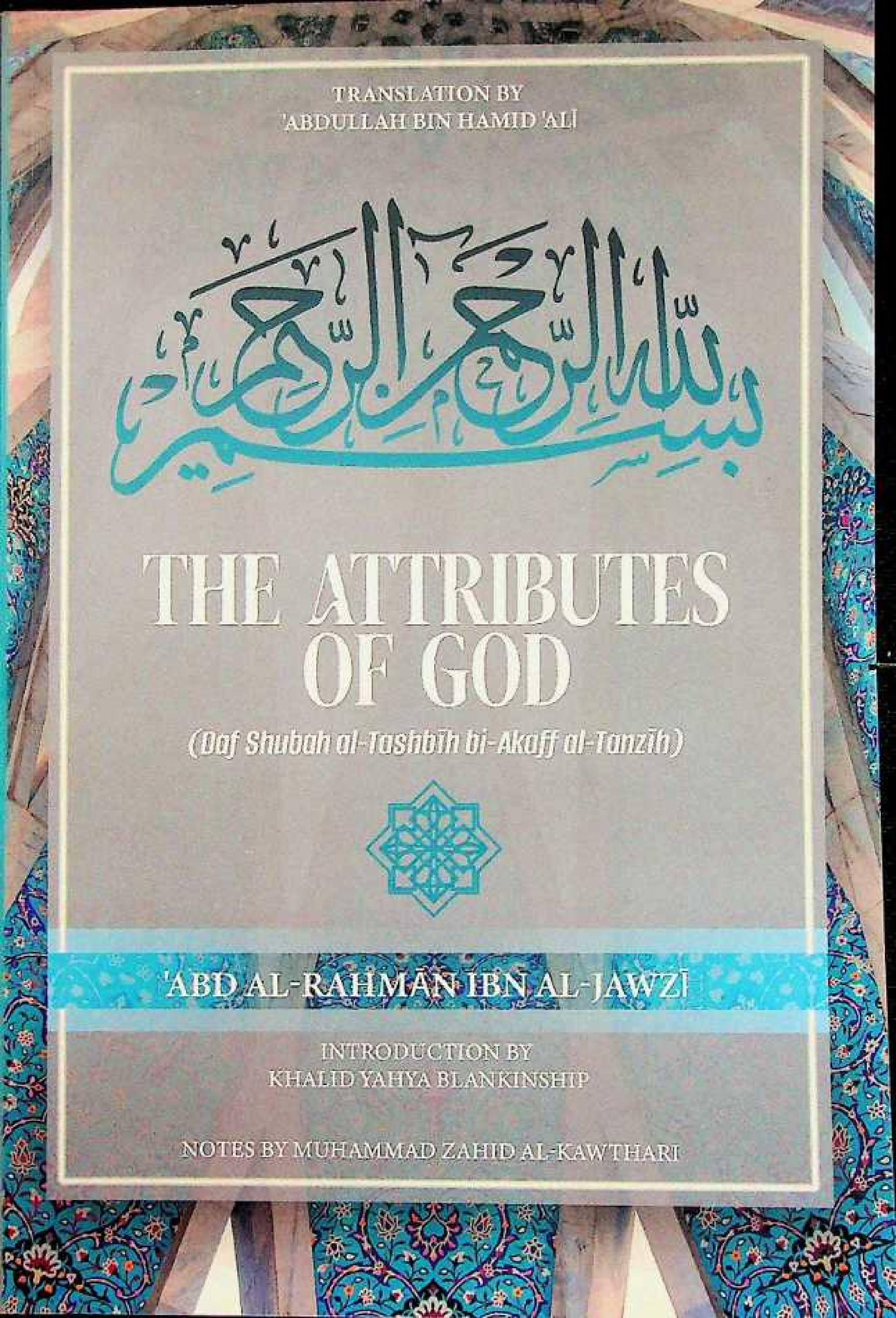

TRANSLATION BY
'ABDULLAH BIN HAMID 'ALĪ

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

(Daf Shubah al-Tashbīh bi-Akaff al-Tanzīh)

'ABD AL-RAHMĀN IBN AL-JAWZĪ

INTRODUCTION BY
KHALID YAHYA BLANKINSHIP

NOTES BY MUHAMMAD ZAHID AL-KAWTHARI

WRITTEN BY ONE OF THE MOST PROLIFIC SCHOLARS IN THE HISTORY OF ISLAM

This book constitutes an important milestone in the classical Muslim discourse about the nature of God. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1201/597) repudiates those who claimed to be followers of Ahmad ibn Hanbal while claiming to believe in God as a corporeal entity possessing a hand, a foot, a shin, a face, and sitting on the Throne in person. By deconstructing this anthropomorphic conception of God, Ibn al-Jawzi examines their literal understanding of an assortment of Qur'anic verses and provides clarification and classification of sixty prophetic traditions. Even today, the debate over figurative interpretation and literalism rages on, making this twelfth-century work an indispensable and authoritative resource for navigating through and understanding the "ambiguous verses" from the Qur'an according to Muslim orthodoxy.

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-GERHARD BOWERING, PROFESSOR OF ISLAMIC STUDIES, YALE UNIVERSITY

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Daf' Shubah al-Tashbīh bi-Akaff al-Tanzīh

'ABD AL-RAḤMĀN IBN AL-JAWZĪ

Introduction by
KHALID YAHYA BLANKINSHIP

Translation, Notes and Appendices by
ABDULLAH BIN HAMID ALI

Original notes by
IMĀM ZĀHID AL-KAWTHARĪ

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THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

PREFACE TO THE 2ND EDITION

Nearly two decades have passed since the release of the 1st edition of *Attributes of God,* a translation of 'Abd Al-Rahmān Ibn al-Jawzi's (c. 1116-1201) *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbīh bi Akaff al-Tanzīh.* And its contents remain hotly debated among Muslim students of dogmatic creed (*'aqīdah*) and speculative theology (*'ilm al-kalām*). The historical ideological rifts between Muslim rationalists (*Ahl al-Ra'y*) and traditionalists (*Ahl al-Hadīth*) persist today in circles committed to eradicating anthropomorphic imagery and imagination of the Divine, especially in Western centers dominated by the ideological heirs of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792) who refer to themselves deferentially as "*As-Salafiyyah.* Those who champion the views of Abū al-Hasan al-'Ash'arī (873-936), Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (853-944), the creed of Abū Ja'far al-Tahāwī (853-933), and Shariah-based Sufism continue to confront and challenge the problematic viewpoints of those who most vociferously claim to follow the pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-sālih*) despite there being no ancestor (*salaf*) for many of their theological proclamations.

This book along with its accompanying notes by the late Muhammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (1879-1952) and its attending appendices serve as a comprehensive rebuttal to many of the truth claims of several Hanbali jurists who the original author refuted despite himself being an opponent of Ash'arism. Despite his critique of Ash'ari theologians, Ibn al-Jawzi's views cohere with theirs on several matters of textual interpretation, especially with respect to the *āyāt* and *aḥādīth* he calls "the annexed reports" (*al-akhbār al-idāfiyyah*) and "reports of attributes" (*akhbār al-sifāt*).

By translating this work and affixing original supporting essays, I hoped to demonstrate a proficient understanding of figurative interpretation (*al-ta'wīl*) and the places where such interpretations were appropriate to avoid assigning human and other corporeal traits to the Creator due to confusion about the conventions of the Arabic language. It was never my goal to encourage disputation about matters whose answers could imperil the souls of its disputants. Rather, my aim was merely to underscore the ambiguity of such expressions insomuch that one concludes that no definitive claims could be made about them beyond the fact that their literal/apparent meanings give the impression that God resembles His creation, an impression worthy of rejection by all Muslims.

After this translation came that of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazāli's (c. 1058-1111) *Iljām al-'Awwāmm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām* which I entitled *A Return to Purity in Creed*. The purpose of this translation was to steer unlearned Muslims away from the perils of speculative theology (*'ilm al-kalām*) in hopes that the community could one day choose to live and let live as there is little reason to believe the transhistorical tendencies of Muslim rationalists and traditionalists will ever disappear. In other words, speculative and natural theology should be studied but not, publicly, debated. Rather, they are best discussed and interrogated in a classroom setting free from sectarian antagonisms, aspersions, accusations of heresy (*bid'ah*) and apostasy (*riddah*), and away from the unsophisticated masses who more easily fall victim to confusion and intolerance.

As this book has been out of print for many years, some have seen it as an opportunity to exploit others by demanding exorbitant prices for the purchase of used copies of the work. Our hope is that by reintroducing *Attributes of God* in this new elegant cover will reduce the financial burden of those who seek to possess it without violating its copyright. On this occasion, I would like to thank Brother Aftab Malik of Amal Press for restoring the copyright to me after its purchase shortly prior to its initial publication in 2006. This charitable act will be counted among your good deeds long after you transition from this world. We pray it will provide eternal benefit to your soul and clarity to many generations to come, God willing. I leave you now with Ibn al-Jawzi's Attributes of God.

7 July 2025
Abdullah bin Hamīd Ali
Dublin, CA

INTRODUCTION

Khalid Yahya Blankinship

The book presented here, a translation of *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbīh bi-Akaff al-Tanzīh* by the famous Iraqi Ḥanbalī scholar, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī (c. 510-597/c. 1116-1201), constitutes an important milestone in classical Muslim discourse about the nature of God. Most certainly, this book was at the center of the arguments that swirled around Ibn al-Jawzī in his own time between literalists on the one hand and those who insisted on interpretation of texts on the other. As Ibn al-Jawzī was a strict Ḥanbalī, this book illuminates difference and division in the Ḥanbalī school over the question of physicalist literalism versus interpretation, and in our own day it illustrates how the same differences continue. On the one hand, Ibn al-Jawzī today remains one of the major pillars of the Ḥanbalī school. His *Kitāb al-Mawdū'āt,* among other works, is approvingly cited by the Salafī muḥaddith, Muḥammad Nāsir al-Dīn al-Albānī (1332-1420/1914-1999). Ibn al-Jawzī is even commemorated in Saudi Arabia by having a whole publishing house named for him, Dār Ibn al-Jawzī in al-Dammām, which publishes works by such Saudi Ḥanbalī shaykhs as Ibn al-'Uthaymīn, for example. On the other hand, this is the same Ibn al-Jawzī who completely rejects the physicalist-literalist anthropomorphism followed by many in the Ḥanbalī school.

Ibn al-Jawzī nevertheless has traditionally stood high in the esteem of the Ḥanbalīs, who tended to dominate or at least strongly to influence Sunnī Islām in late ʻAbbāsid Baġhdād. Born in Baġhdād, the capital city of the ʻAbbāsid caliphate, Ibn al-Jawzī lived almost all his life and died in his native city. One of the most prolific scholars in the history of Islām, he is said to have authored over seven hundred works, many of them large multivolume sets. Baġhdād was the capital of the ʻAbbāsid caliphs, but their actual political power had declined starting in 247/861 with a military coup by Turkish generals, who then formalized their power from 322/934 with the institutionalization of a new office of political or military dictator, at first called *amīr al-umarāʻ* or "supreme commander" and later *sulṭān* or "authority." The military rulers, who were Iranian Shīʻīs in the period 334-447/945-1055, completely controlled the caliphs, who became like prisoners living in a gilded cage, preserved only to give a formal appearance of legitimacy to those rulers.

In order to resist such confinement, humiliation, and loss of power, the ʻAbbāsid caliphs adopted and clung to the Ḥanbalī school with considerable tenacity. Their resistance began to appear in 408/1017 with the demand of the Caliph al-Qādir (reigned 381-422/991-1031) that the Muʻtazilī and Ḥanafī scholars in Baġhdād and elsewhere recant their errors in *ʻaqīda*. He further extended and amplified this decision in 409/1018 with the publication of *al-Risāla al-Qādiriyya*. In this work, the caliph not only condemned Shīʻism, but also Muʻtazilism and Ashʻarism, thus affirming the Ḥanbalī creed in its literalist form as worked out in the previous century.[1] In 420/1029, the caliph renewed the condemnation of Shīʻism and Muʻtazilism. The Caliph al-Qāʻim (reigned 422-467/1031-1075) reiterated the creed of *al-Risāla al-Qādiriyya* in 432/1041 with another public proclamation.

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[1] See "A Longer Hanbalite Creed" as given in *Islamic Creeds: A Selection*, translated by William Montgomery Watt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994) pp. 33-39. This is the same as the *'aqīda* related by A ḥmad ibn Ja'far ibn Ya'qūb ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Frisī al-Istakhrī, who is possibly the actual author. Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, *al-'Aqīda li-al-Imām A ḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, ed. by 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Izz al-Dīn al-Sayrawān (Damascus: Dār Qutaybah, 1408/1988) pp. 73-82.

With the coming of the Saljūq Turks, whose leaders called themselves sultāns, the situation seemed likely to improve in the 'Abbāsids' favor, for the Saljūqs were Sunnīs and professed to honor the Sunnī caliphs. But this proved to be only for show, and the caliphs remained powerless and confined. The Saljūqs themselves favored the Ḥanafī school, while their famous minister Niẓām al-Mulk (408-485/1018-1092), who founded the Niẓāmiyya colleges starting in 459/1067, favored the Shāfi'īs. Indeed, the Niẓāmiyya colleges were meant to spread the teachings of the Shāfi'ī school and were thus opposed by the Ḥanbalīs. The Caliphs al-Muqtadī (reigned 467-487/1075-1094) and al-Mustarshid (reigned 512-529/1118-1135) are attested as having supported the Shāfi'ī legal school, and this was the age of the great thinker Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (450-505/1058-1111), a Shāfi'ī who was an advisor of the Caliph al-Mustaẓhir (reigned 487-512/1094-1118). Thus, the Ḥanbalī school seems to have gone into eclipse in Baġhdād for a time, a period coinciding almost exactly with the life of the Ash'arī-leaning Ḥanbalī Ibn 'Aqīl (431-513/1040-1119), who was to be an inspiration for Ibn al-Jawzī. Ibn 'Aqīl, though a Ḥanbalī, had studied Mu'tazilī *kalām* and was disliked by many other Ḥanbalīs, so that he had to go into hiding (from 460 to 465/1068-1072) and was only able to reemerge when he made a public retraction of his favor for the Sūfī al-Hallāj (d. 310/922) and for certain doctrines which agreed with Mu'tazilism, a retraction which he repeated in front of the Caliph al-Qā'im. After this, Ibn 'Aqīl remained unswervingly loyal to the Ḥanbalī creed. Thus, the Ḥanbalī pressure in Baġhdād to conform remained strong despite the Shāfi'ī trend.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the rise of the Shāfi'īs was again soon reversed as the Caliph al-Muqtafī (reigned

530-555/1136-1160) returned to support the Ḥanbalī school through his chief minister ʻAwn al-Dīn Ibn Hubayrah (499-560/1105-1165), who was a major Ḥanbalī scholar in his own right and one of the main teachers of Ibn al-Jawzī. Ibn Hubayrah served as prime minister 544-560/1149-1164. After al-Muqtafī, the Ḥanbalī influence continued unchecked under the Caliphs al-Mustanjid (reigned 555-566/1160-1170) and al-Mustadīʻ (reigned 566-575), when Ibn al-Jawzī's influence reached its height. Likewise, Zumurrud Khātūn, the mother of the next Caliph, al-Nāsir (reigned 575-622/1180-1226), strongly favored the Ḥanbalī school, endowing madrasahs for it and interceding for its followers when they were accused before the caliph. Al-Nāsir himself, however, was not so completely committed to the Ḥanbalī school, because, as an independent ruler now free of interference from outside sultāns, he wanted to get all the Muslims, even the Shīʻīs, to accept him. On the other hand, although more open to a variety of legal schools, al-Nāsir continued the promotion of the anthropomorphist creed of the Ḥanbalīs and worked just like his predecessors to prohibit *kalām* and philosophical discourse completely.

kalām, originally just meaning "speech" or "talk," had arisen in the sense of philosophical discourse on Islam in the 2nd/8th century, when Muslims, getting into more religious arguments now with Christians and other non-Muslims, began to use logical arguments to defend their faith. In a sense, this goes back to the Qur'ān itself, where the Muslims and other hearers are called on by God numerous times to reflect on His signs in creation.[2] Indeed, among these verses, 2:266, 7:176 and 10:24 directly ask the hearers to reflect on a similitude or parable, in other words, an example of figurative speech. *kalām* arguments sought to organize the material in the Qur'ān and also somewhat of the

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[2] See for example, Qur'ān 2:219-220, 266; 3:191; 7:176; 10:24; 13:3; 16:11, 44, 69; 30:21; 34:46; 39:42; 45:13; 59:21

Ḥadīth into a coherent, logical, well-ordered presentation of Muslim belief about God, creation, the universe, the Judgment, the afterlife, and so on. However, as such arguments developed, the group most closely associated with the early 'Abbāsid caliphs, the Mu'tazilites, also adopted the methods of Greek logic and rational philosophical argumentation to defend the faith. But this led them to conclusions that seemed to limit the power of God, such as their doctrine that God is constrained to be Just at the Judgment and thus that His mercy cannot override His justice. This seemed to turn God into a cosmic justice machine and was unacceptable to most Sunnīs, who continued to believe in God as a benevolent and powerful personal being. When the Mu'tazila tried to use force to impose their creed under the Caliph al-Mu'tasim (reigned 218-227/833-842), the attempt backfired and they were ousted from office and influence in about 234/849 by the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (reigned 232-247/847-861), who favored the traditionists such as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164-241/780-855) instead. Thus, the favor of the 'Abbāsid caliphs for the anthropomorphist Ḥanbalī creed may go back as early as the 3rd/9th century.

The response of the Sunnī traditionists to the Mu'tazila and others who sought to widen the interpretation of texts was severe, as they frowned on all interpretation in doctrine and creed whatsoever or prohibited it outright. Such a stance was understandable, as the traditionists feared that if the words of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth could be taken to mean other than their obvious meaning, interpreters would be able to claim that any text meant anything they wanted it to mean, which would cause the religion to fall apart. On the other hand, they had to admit that some texts were obscure or ambiguous, just as stated in Qur'ān 3:7. To solve this problem, they differentiated between *tafsīr*, meaning acceptable interpretation based on other texts, and *ta'wīl*, meaning figurative interpretation based on linguistic understanding or self-conceived comprehension. *Tafsīr* was considered acceptable eventually, but *ta'wīl* was not for the most anti-interpretation traditionalists. This distinction developed slowly, for the title of even the king of all *tafsīrs*, that of Abū Ja'far al-Tabarī (224-310/839-923), *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an wujūh ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, contains the offending word *ta'wīl*, yet that commentary follows the traditionalist methodology of *tafsīr bi-al-ma'thūr*.

For the Ḥanbalīs of his day, al-Tabarī's reliance on tradition, which paralleled their own, was not enough, however. Al-Tabarī clashed with them over the interpretation of the "praiseworthy station" (*maqāman mahmūdan*) which the Prophet Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him peace, would be accorded at the Judgment (Qur'ān 17:79). Al-Tabarī repudiated an explanatory anthropomorphic ḥadīth beloved by many Ḥanbalīs asserting that the Prophet Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him peace, at the Judgment would be seated beside God on God's throne. His rejection of this ḥadīth, which is not found in any of the major collections,[3] is said to be the reason for the Ḥanbalī riots against al-Tabarī in Baġhdād during the latter part of his life. This very ḥadīth is also rejected by Ibn al-Jawzī and is Ḥadīth No. 39 in the present book.

In order to enforce their creed, Ḥanbalīs circulated such blatantly anthropomorphic ḥadīths, many of which were subsequently judged to be weak, such as many of those amassed in *Kitāb al-'Azamah* by Abū al-Shaykh 'Abd Allāh ibn Mu ḥammad al-Isfahānī (274-369/887-979).[4] The Ḥanbalīs felt that the more anthropomorphic ḥadīth texts that could be adduced, the more the Ash'arī supporters of *ta'wīl* would have difficulty explaining them away. Then the Ash'arīs would be placed in a dilemma of either authorizing far-fetched explanations to explain away the anthropomorphisms of the ḥadīths in question, or else compelled, like al-Tabarī in the above example, to deny their validity altogether, which would open them to a charge of being deviants from the correct path, through which actual legal procedures could perhaps be initiated against them, since the caliphs supported only the Ḥanbalī creed. This was the situation which Ibn al-Jawzī grew up with.

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[3] The ḥadīth is cited and discussed in Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī (224-310/839-923), *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, Būlāq* (al-Matba'ah al-Amīriyyah, 1322-1330/[1904-1912]) Vol. XV, pp. 97-100; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, Kitāb al-Riqāq, Bāb Sifat al-Jannah wa-al-Nār, Ḥadīth 6073, CD ROM "Mawsū'at al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf," Harf Co. of Egypt.

Yet the Ḥanbalī argument had certain weaknesses. The most salient of these was the lack of anthropomorphisms in the Qur'ān compared with, say, the Bible.[5] Indeed, the Qur'ān is to the contrary quite specific in saying that nothing is like God (Qur'ān 42:11; 112:4). Also, although the Qur'ān does mention the "coming" of God (Qur'ān 2:210; 89:22) and his place being on high (Qur'ān 16:50; 67:16-17; 69:16-17), all physical descriptions of His person are avoided, unlike the case with the Bible. Thus, the anthropomorphists felt the need for ḥadīth texts to support their position.

It was here that Ibn al-Jawzī stepped in with both the present book, *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbīh bi-Akaff al-Tanzīh*, and the somewhat larger *Kitāb Akhbār al-Sifāt*, his other work against anthropomorphism. Already possessing an intense interest in ḥadīth criticism, as exemplified by his famous earlier work *Kitāb al-Mawdū'āt* exposing ḥadīths he judged fabricated, Ibn al-Jawzī devoted the two further books to criticizing ḥadīths which the Ḥanbalī anthropomorphists used as proof texts. This development in his thought can be traced in the latter part of his life. Faultlessly loyal to the 'Abbāsid caliphs, Ibn al-Jawzī continued in the 'Abbāsid and Ḥanbalī tradition of hostility to Ash'arīs, Mu'tazilīs, and Shī'īs, a tradition those caliphs had sponsored for so long as means to enhance their own legitimacy in the face of the Ḥanafī Saljūq Turks and their Shāfi'ī prime ministers. However, Ibn al-Jawzī reported no incidents against the Ash'arīs in his great historical-biographical compendium *al-Muntazam* after 567/1171, and then the Caliph al-Mustaḍī' expelled the Turkish amīrs in 569/1173, enabling him to adopt a more relaxed and ecumenical policy. Inspired by the example and the thought of Ibn 'Aqīl, Ibn al-Jawzī matched the caliph's political and ideological shift in the religious arena by ceasing his own public opposition to Ash'arism from this time, a move which caused him to become increasingly identified with *ta'wīl*, resulting in growing dissatisfaction with him from within the Ḥanbalī school. This Ḥanbalī opposition, oddly in collusion with the Shī'ī prime minister, played a major role in his arrest and exile to Wāsit in 590-595/1194-1199. That he was able to overcome this opposition and return to Baghdād in triumph in 595/1199, partly through the intercession of the Caliph al-Nāsir's mother Zumurrud, shows that the Ḥanbalī influence over the 'Abbāsids had waned a bit since the time of the humiliation of Ibn `Aqīl over a hundred years earlier.[6]

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[4] Abū al-Shaykh 'Abd Allāh ibn Mu ḥammad al-Isfahānī (274-369/887-979), *Kitāb al-'Azamah* (Riyadh: Dār al-'Asimah, 1408/[1988]) 5 vols., passim.

[5] For example, see See Exod: 24:10-11; 1 Kg. 22:19; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26-27; 8:1-3; 43:7; Dan. 7:9; 10:5-6; Rev. 4:2-3, 5, 9-11; 5:1, 7

Judging by this history, it was almost certainly in the period 569-590/1173-1194 that Ibn al-Jawzī produced *Daf'Shubah al-Tashbīh* and, *Kitāb Akhbār al-Sifāt.*[7] The exact relationship of these two works is unknown; *Daf'Shubah al-Tashbīh* may be a shorter version of *Kitāb Akhbār al-Sifāt*, or the latter may rather be a longer version of the former.[8] Ḥanbalīs of the time naturally viewed these works with much dislike and suspicion, but they nevertheless had an effect in deflating the alleged ḥadīths that they attacked. Indeed, it appears that the Ḥanbalīs subsequently lost interest in the very anthropomorphic text that al-Tabarī had previously run afoul of. Ibn al-Jawzī was still criticized by his younger contemporary, Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāmah, who remained devoted to the old school, but later Ḥanbalīs, including Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Rajab were less censorious.

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[6] On this period of Ibn al-Jawzī's life, see Merlin Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār al-Sifāt* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) pp. 21-26, 38-45.

[7] Ibid. p.45, speculatively estimates a narrower window for the writing of *Kitāb Akhbār al-Sifāt*, 581-588/1185-1192, but I see no particular grounds for this.

The translator and annotator of *Daf'Shubah al-Tashbīh* in this volume, Shaykh Abdullah bin Ḥamid 'Ali, brings excellent qualifications to his task. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the USA, Shaykh Abdullah studied Arabic and Islām at the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America (IIASA) in Fairfax, Virginia, and attended Temple University before going abroad to study Sharī'ah in the ancient and venerable Qarawiyyīn University at Fez, Morocco, where he completed his four-year advanced degree, culminating in his senior thesis written on the Muslim creedal system (*'aqīda* or *usūl al-dīn*). During his university work in Morocco, he also studied the *fiqh* of Mālik, particularly the *Risāla* of Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī and the *Mukhtasar* of Khalīl ibn Ishāq al-Jundī and some of the commentaries on those two works.

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[8] Ibid. pp. x-xi.

al-Tabarī, Vol. XI, *The Challenge to the Empires: A.D. 633-635/A.H.* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993) and *The History of al-Tabarī*, Vol. XXV, *The End of Expansion: The Caliphate of Hishām A.D. 724- 738/A.H.* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In translating this text, I have depended on the 1998/1118 printing of *al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li al-Turāth* entitled, *Daf' Shubha al-Tashbīh* which can be translated as "Dispelling the Doubt of Anthropomorphism." The source of this publication was authenticated and furnished with footnotes by the late Imām of the *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a*, Shaykh Muḥammad Zāhid ibn al-Hasan al-Kawtharī (d. 1371/1951) may God have mercy on him.

Realizing that non-specialists will read this book, I have tried to further clarify points by including my own footnotes. These can be distinguished from Shaykh Kawtharī's own notes by the prefix "Translator." I have also taken the liberty to include references to the Qur'ānic verses mentioned in the text, something that was not included in the *Maktaba al-Azhariyya li al-Turāth* edition. All dates throughout the text refer to the Ḥijrī calendar, unless otherwise stated.

I would like to thank Dr. Gibril Fouad Haddad for providing the biography of Ibn al-Jawzī, which has been abridged from a much lengthier biography.

I humbly request readers upon reading this book, to reserve a little space for me in their prayers, and to ask God Almighty that

He provides me with the best of this world and the next and to give me true faith, good health, and overall well-being.

And the last of our prayers is *All praise belongs to God, Lord of all the worlds.*

Abdullah bin Hamid Ali
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
August 2006

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to God. We extol Him and beseech Him for assistance and guidance. We take refuge with Him from the evil within our souls and from our misdeeds. Whoever God guides none can misguide, and whomever He misguides none can guide. I testify that there is no god other than God alone who has no associate, testifying as one who is certain of His existence and oneness, and who affirms all His beautiful names and attributes in which He is unrivaled. It is He who informs us in the clear portion of His Book that: *There is nothing like Him; And He is the All Hearing the All Seeing* (Qur'ān 42: 11). He has endowed us with intelligence by which He dignified humanity to the exclusion of all other creatures so that we would find a way to His divine existence; by witnessing His signs in His creation, and beholding the inimitable marvels of His Prophets and Messengers. And I testify that our master, Muḥammad ﷺ is His slave and Messenger, the truthful who *does not speak from passion* (Qur'ān 53:3). We ask God to grant mercy and peace to him, his family, his devout companions, and those who follow them in goodness until the Day that all creatures will be gathered together and not a single soul will have refuge.

To proceed: anthropomorphism is defined as "The ascribing of human motivation and characteristics to inanimate objects, animals, or natural phenomena."[9] It is also used to ascribe such motivations and characteristics to God. This definition is synonymous with the Arabic Islamic theological terms, *tashbīh* and *tajsīm*.[10] The minute difference between these two terms is that *tashbīh* is a general term, which means "Ascribing the resemblance of a created thing (namely human) to God or vice versa," whereas *tajsīm* is a specific type of *tashbīh*, meaning to "Ascribe a body or bodily characteristics to God."

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[9] *Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary* (New York: Berkley Books, 1984)

By writing this book, Imām Abū al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzī al-Ḥanbalī exonerates the *madhhab* of Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, may God be pleased with him, from the accusation of being one who equates God with His creation[11] as has been attributed to him as a result of the anthropomorphic leanings of some scholars of the Ḥanbalī School. In particular, Ibn al-Jawzī focuses his polemic on three scholars. Two lived almost a century before him, Imām Abū 'Abd Allāh Hasan ibn Hāmid (d. 403) and Qādī Abū Ya'lā Muḥammad ibn Husayn (d. 458) while the third was his own shaykh, Abū Hasan 'Alī ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Nasr Zāġhūnī (d. 527). In addition to these Ḥanbalī scholars, there were other Ḥanbalīs [12] who held anomalous views in understanding "The verses of Attributes" (*Āyāt al-Sifāt*), which fall under the category of the "Ambiguous Verses" of the Qur'ān and the Sunna. Their view was that these Qur'ānic verses and ḥadīths were to be understood according to their literal meanings. The implication is that whatever is indicated by the original meaning of these words and phrases, they were to be understood as an attribute of God. However, when it was brought to their attention that understanding such words according to their original linguistic meanings would necessitate that God resembles His creation, since possessing hands, eyes, a face, and feet are characteristics exclusively designated to the creation, they said, "We acknowledge that God has a *real* face, foot, hands, and eyes. However they are neither like those of the creation nor are they as you may think of them." Initially this reply appears to be acceptable, but the confusion that follows from embracing such a position becomes clearer when they are asked, "Does God have limbs and body parts?" They respond: "Absolutely not!" When further asked, "Do you agree that hands and feet are limbs of the body?" They respond, "Yes. We concur." But when it is said that, "God does not have hands or feet," they adamantly reply, "You can't say that!" For this reason, many scholars have declared the aforementioned Ḥanbalī scholars as well as others in later times[13] to be anthropomorphists, given that they first insult the intelligence by negating God's possession of limbs, and then affirming that He does have them, "But not as we understand them to be."

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[10] Imām al-Jarjānī defines the Anthropomorphists as, "A people who drew comparisons between God–High is He–and created things and equated Him to emergent beings." See *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*: 216

[11] In the contemporary "debates" that frequent our universities on whether one is to accept the literal meaning of the ambiguous verses or to interpret them, the focus soon shifts to one of the sunni Imam's of 'aqida: Imām Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī. Those of the Salafi persuasion argue that his book, *kitāb al-Ibāna* was the last book that he wrote in an attempt to justify anthropomorphic statements. By claiming this, they castigate those who use *ta'wil* and argue that those who claim to be Ash'arī in 'aqida are actually contradicting the methodology of their Imām. I examine this claim in a small case study on his book in Appendix I.

[12] Such as Abū Bakr ibn Khuzayma who died in the year 311

Ibn al-Jawzī argues that to understand the ambiguous verses of the Qur'ān and the Sunna correctly, one must first remember that the Qur'ān was revealed in the Arabic language which itself comprises of diverse literary styles, nuances and constructs. He stresses that while the Qur'ān contains words and phrases that are to be understood in their original literal meanings, it also contains words and phrases that need to be understood according to their figurative meanings. God says: *Verily We have made it an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may comprehend* (Qur'ān 43:3). As the Qur'ān is revealed in Arabic, it must be understood according to the constructs of that language, which is made up of both literal and figurative expressions. When it is said that a word literally means such and such according to how it was originally understood, it must concur with the way that the Arabs of the time of Revelation understood that literal meaning to be. For example, the Arabs during the time of Revelation understood the literal meaning of "hand" (*yad*) to mean "bodily limb" (*al-jāriha*). Regardless then, of later and more specific definitions of "hand," we know how the Arabs of the time of the Revelation understood it. In addition, Ibn al-Jawzī charges his opponents of ignorance over the rules of logic that help to distinguish between what is possible, impossible, and necessary in terms of existence. He argues that if the three scholars, Abū 'Abd Allāh Hasan ibn Hāmid, Qādī Abū Ya'lā Muḥammad ibn Husayn and Abū Hasan 'Alī ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Nasr Zāghūnī had mastered the discipline of logic and its underlying principles, they would not have fallen into the trap of double talk which resulted in an anthropomorphic understanding of the attributes of God.

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[13] Such as Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya who died in the year 728

THE NATURE OF WORDS AND PHRASES

In order to appreciate and better understand the complex, often technically taxing nature of this book, it would be beneficial to discuss here the nature of words and phrases. It can be said about practically every language that is spoken and written, that the meaning of words are understood either in a literal or a figurative sense. When words can have more than one meaning, most of them are said to have literal and figurative meanings. Such Arabic words have been categorized in the following way:[14]

1. *Nass*

The first category of word or expression according to the language of the majority of Arabic scholars of language is called *nass,* which means " clear, explicit, unequivocal, or unambiguous." It is the type of word or expression that is subject to only one meaning. Examples of this type of word are the Arabic numbers: *wāhid*, *ithnān*, *thalātha*, etc. (one, two, three...). 'One' can only mean "one," and 'two' can only mean "two." There are no other meanings.

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[14] This is the division supported by the majority of Arabic linguists and legal theorists. The Ḥanafīs have a slightly different division. See footnote 9.

2. *Zāhir*

The second category of words is known as *zāhir*, which means "apparent." The *zāhir* meaning of a word or phrase is its apparent meaning. This type of word always has more than one meaning, but has an acknowledged original meaning. *Zāhir* is similar to the word *haqīqa*, which means "reality, fact, or the literal/true sense of a word or expression." The *zāhir* of a word is its *haqīqa*, which means its original linguistic meaning. An example of a *zāhir* word in Arabic would be the word *yad*, which can be taken to mean a number of things such as "hand, favor, power and authority." The *zāhir* of *yad* is "hand," because this is the first meaning that the Arabs understood it to refer to. The other meanings developed over time and were therefore considered to be the figurative uses of the word. When a word is used in its figurative sense, it is said to have been interpreted or reassigned a different meaning. This is where the term, *ta'wīl* comes from. *Ta'wīl* is usually applied when the literal understanding of a word can no longer be taken. The Arab linguists express this by saying, "Predominance in speech is given to the literal sense."

3. *Mujmal*

The third category of word called *mujmal*, means "ambiguous, or obscure," and has a close connection in meaning to *mutashābih* (ambiguous) in the sense that the actual intent of the speaker is not apparently known unless the speaker clarifies what he means. This is a characteristic of both terms. Scholars define *mutashābih* as, "That of whose knowledge God has appropriated solely to Himself."[15] Scholars understood that no one could claim to know with absolute certainty what specific meaning God has intended. These words or expressions were deemed to be *mutashābih* from that regard, in spite of the fact that the expression may be acted upon or applied. The Ḥanafīs understood that when the speaker offers no clarification and there is no way to know with absolute certainty what the meaning may be, it is described as *mutashābih*. However, if there were a way to know the meaning from the speaker, it would be described as *mujmal*.[16]

The only significant difference between *mujmal* and *mutashābih* in the view of the majority is that *mujmal* is subject to being applied. That is, it awaits clarification, since it pertains to ritual, revolves around action and the rulings pertaining to law (*fiqh*). As for *mutashābih*—in spite of co-opting *mujmal* in the realm of ambiguity, its application is purely theoretical and rational. In other words, it does not pertain to anything that can be applied in a person's life were clarification to be given. For this reason, jurists have differed over the interpretation of areas such as prayer, fasting, marriage, and divorce, as these can legitimately be referred to as being *mutashābih* from the particular regard over which they differ. But because action is demanded from everyone, an interpretation must be adopted as long as there is a valid interpretation in the language. As for verses that pertain to human characteristics, such as hands and eyes that God annexes to His name, no interpretation is demanded other than to know that what is intended with regard to humans is not what is intended with regard to God. That is because it is no one's duty to imagine the way God exists. If not for this minute distinction, it could justifiably be said that the words *mujmal* and *mutashābih* are absolutely identical, at least according to the way it is defined by most scholars.[17]

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[15] These divisions can be referenced in *Hâshiyat al-Bannāni 'ala Sharh al-Ma ḥalli li Jam' al-Jawāmi'*: 2/53, 2/59-62; *Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt li 'Ali ibn Aḥmad Al-Jarjānī*: pages 142, 196, 241.

[16] If the expression is given clarification by another expression, it is then called *mubayyan* (clarified) according to most scholars. It is called *mufassar* only when it is followed by words that give complete clarity to the expression, according to Ḥanafīs.

An example of a *mujmal* word is, *'ayn* which most people, including the Arabs today, would place under the category of *zāhir*. *'Ayn* means "eye, spring, coins, a letter of the alphabet, spy, sun" and other meanings. As a result, the word *'ayn* is actually classified as ambiguous (*mujmal*). When the Arabs of the time of Revelation used this word, they allowed the context in which it was being used to determine the particular meaning that the word implied. This is contrary to the way this word is being explained today, whereby the understanding is that the original meaning of the word is an "eye."[18] Other examples of words that are used in their figurative senses to the extent that their original meanings have been disregarded include:

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[17] As for Ḥanafīs, something is *mujmal* when it requires clarification that can only be given by the speaker as with the *mutashabih*. But with most scholars, a *mujmal* expression can also be clarified by research and study.

[18] The Ḥanafīs on the other hand, divide expressions into what is "clear in indication" and what is "unclear in indication." The clear in indication are four: *zāhir, Nass, Mufassar*, and *Muhkam*. The unclear in indication happen to be opposites for these categories. They are respectively: *Khafi, mushkil, mujmal*, and *mutashābih*.

Zāhir is the least of the four in clarity. An expression is said to be *zāhir* in the Ḥanafī view when it doesn't demand any factor outside of the expression to clarify its meaning. But despite being clear, the *zāhir* ruling we extract from the expression is not the original meaning intended to be transmitted through it.

Nass is "whatever meaning the comments were originally conveyed to express." This is like God's statement: *And God has permitted exchange while He has forbidden usury* (Qur'ān 2: 275). The verse was originally conveyed to clarify that there is a distinction between monetary exchange and usury. However, it is apparent from this verse that exchange is also permitted while usury is not. So the difference between *Nass* and *Zāhir* is that the *Nass*-meaning is the "clearly understood and original meaning intended to be conveyed from the statement," while the *Zāhir*-meaning is nothing more than "a meaning clearly understood without needing anything additional that is not originally intended to be clarified."

As for *mufassar* (explained), it is defined as: "The word or expression whose meaning is apparent due to it being clarified by the speaker in such a way that there

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no longer remains the possibility of it being interpreted or given specification." See: *Uṣūl al-Shāshī*: p. 76)

An example of this would be in God's saying: *So the angels prostrated, all of them, altogether* (Qur'ān 15: 30). This verse is apparent in its indication that the angels prostrated to Adam. But if it had not been for the addition of "all of them" one could say that perhaps not all of the angels prostrated. With the addition of these words, it removes that possibility, so it is termed *mufassar*, which to the Ḥanafīs is synonymous with *Nass* as seen by the majority of legal specialists.

As for *Muḥkam* (unequivocal), it is defined as "whatever unequivocally indicates its meaning by itself without being subject to cancellation or replacement, with no possibility of being interpreted." See *Uṣūl al-Shāshī*: p. 80 and 'Abd al-Wahhāb Khallāf, '*Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh*,' p. 168. The ruling of a scriptural text that is *muḥkam* is not subject to abrogation or change when circumstance and place change. An example of this is the Prophet's statement, God bless and grant him peace, "*Jihad* is effective until the Day of Resurrection."

After close examination, one should be able to see that with the Ḥanafīs, *Zāhir* is more general than *Mufassar* and *Muḥkam*, and *Nass* is more general than *Zāhir*, *Mufassar*, and *Muḥkam*. See *Uṣūl al-Shāshī*, pp. 68-85

The opposite of *Zāhir* (apparent) is *khafī* (obscure), which is defined as "that whose meaning is unclear as a result of an incident, not a result of the wording." An example is God's saying: *And the thief—male and female—cut off their hands* (Qur'ān 5: 38). It is *Zāhir* with respect to cutting off the hand of the thief, but it is *khafī* with respect to cutting off the hand of the pickpocket and grave-robber, since they have different names designated to them.

The opposite of *Nass* (clear/unproblematic) is *Mushkil* (problematic), defined as "what is greater in obscurity than *khafī* to the point that after a particular reality becomes obscure to the listener–the obscurity transfers to similar realities in a manner that the meaning can only be understood through research followed by contemplation until the reality under observation is distinguished from those like it." This is like if one were to swear that he will not eat condiments. This would apparently apply to things like vinegar and honey. But it is *mushkil* with relation to things like meat, eggs, and cheese until one seeks out what is meant by "condiments." Then, one would have to contemplate over whether or not that meaning applies to meat, eggs, and cheese. Once one is able to distinguish, the expression is no longer considered *Mushkil*. As for *Nass*, research and contemplation are not required. The majority define *Nass* as "what has only one meaning so that it is not confused with other things."

The opposite of *Mufassar* is *Mujmal*, defined as "what has many probabilities with regard to meaning to the point that it becomes as if the meaning can only be known by having the speaker give clarification." So if the speaker has clarified his point so there is no confusion, the expression is called *mufassar*. The majority of scholars however, refer to this as *mubayyan*.

The opposite of *Muḥkam* is *Mutashābih*, which is defined by the overwhelming majority of scholars as "that whose knowledge Allah has appropriated solely with Him." Jarjāni defines it as "what is obscure in its wording and isn't hoped to be understood by any means, like the severed letters at the start of the Sūrahs." See

1. *Dābba*

This word in its modern usage refers exclusively to "riding beasts" or "beasts of burden." However, the original linguistic meaning of the word applies to "any thing that crawls or walks on the Earth." Thus the word can also apply to humans, as God says: *And there is not a single creature (dābba) on Earth except that upon God is its provision* (Qur'ān 11: 6).

2. *Walad*

This word is used to refer to "male children," despite the fact its original signification is to refer to "the child" (*al-mawlūd*) whether it is male or female.

3. *Zawj*

This word is similar to the word *walad*. Many people do not know that in its original usage, *zawj* means "one of a pair," and therefore can refer to either the male or female spouse. However, many believe that it can only be used to refer to the male spouse and to refer to the female spouse the word *zawja* is used, which is unnecessary since *zawj* already encapsulates this.

Far from being the exclusive realm of the Arabic language, the English language also contains a number of interesting metaphors and idiomatic phrases. For instance, when someone says, "give me a hand," they do not expect the one being asked to cut off his own hand (or someone else's for that matter) and to give it to him. Rather, all that is meant is "assist me." The only time that confusion might occur as to what is being

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Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt: p.200 and *Hāshiyat al-Bannānī 'alā Sharh Jam' al-Jawāmi'*, 1/269-270.

With regards to the *mushkil*, clarity is reached by way of research and contemplation. As for the *mujmal*, the actual speaker must provide clarity, and in the case of the *mutashābih*, no clarity is provided by either the speaker, nor is it reached through research or contemplation. See *Sharh al-Gangohī 'ala Usūl al-Shāshī*, p. 83

implied is if someone were asked to "give me a hand" while on a battlefield with organs and body parts scattered on the ground. In this particular instance, saying, "give me a hand," might lead one to hesitate for a moment. But even this would stretch the imagination. Another common expression is, "keep an eye on this." This is a metaphor, which everyone understands to mean to watch over something. It would be illogical for one to assume that it means to gauge out one eye and put it on top of a thing. Yet another interesting phrase is said when one is fed up with a situation or at someone's abuse of them. We often hear people saying, "I'm putting my foot down!" And it is an expression that is used when the person saying this is going to take some affirmative action. No one would expect that person to either stomp on their foot nor to take it off and place it on the ground.

As these regularly used expressions demonstrate, the use of metaphor is common to every language and the Arabic language is no exception. It was 'Uthmān ibn Jinnī,[19] one of the most proficient Arabic philologists, grammarian, linguist and one of the most knowledgeable of them in grammar and morphology, who said, "Most of the language is metaphor."

METAPHOR IN THE QUR'ĀN

The Qur'ān is replete with metaphor (*isti'āra*) and indirect expression (*kināya*). If it were not for its figurative expressions and depictions, we would not have known anything about the miraculous nature and inimitability of the Qur'ān.[20] God challenged the Quraysh: *And if you are in doubt as to what We have*

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[19] He is 'Uthmān ibn Jinnī, Abū al-Fath al-Mawsilī, Some of his most famous works are *al-Khasā'is* in the subject of grammar, *Sirr al-Sanāra*, and *Sharh Tasrīf Al-Mazinī*. He died in the year 392. See *Wafayāt al-'Ayān*: 2/410, *Bughya al-Wu'āt*: 2/132, and *Mu'jam al-Udabā*: 12/81

[20] For a detailed discussion on the presence of figurative language in both the Qur'ān and Sunna and how the *Salaf* used *ta'wīl* (figurative interpretation), see Appendix II "Figurative Language in Islamic Scripture."

revealed to our slave, then produce a surah from its likeness (Qur'ān 2: 23). This challenge from God was not merely to construct sentences, but it was a challenge to emulate its style, metaphor and meaning. One of the greatest examples of the Qur'ānic eloquence and elegance is in the saying of the Almighty: *Do they but wait until God comes to them in canopies of clouds?* (Qur'ān 2: 210) Imām Zamakhsharī said concerning this verse:

> If it is said, "Why will the punishment come to them in clouds?" I would say, "because the clouds are the most likely object [of the descent] of mercy. And when the punishment descends from it, the matter is more horrid and horrific, since when evil comes from where it is not expected, it is more distressing. Similarly, when good comes from where it is not expected, it is more pleasing. So how about when evil comes from where good is expected?"

God also says: *Verily those who harm God and His Messenger, God curses them in the world and the Hereafter* (Qur'ān 33: 57). If we agree that this verse is to be taken literally as those who deny the occurrence of metaphor in the Qur'ān and Sunna claim, we would have to accept that it is possible to harm God. Expressed as a metaphor, in this verse God dignifies the supporters of the causes of good by portraying the harm that befalls them at the hands of their enemies in a way that it is as if it harms God, when in reality He cannot be harmed. In another verse, God says: *If you help God, He will help you* (Qur'ān 47: 7). While we all know that we cannot help God, we can however help the people of God and His cause. Yet another example of metaphor is when God says: *Whoever was in this (life) blind then he is in the Hereafter blind* (Qur'ān 17: 72). If we read this literally, one would not be faulted to ask what the blind man has done in this world to be condemned to be blind in the Afterlife? His lack of sight is something beyond his control, so why should God punish him with eternal blindness? In fact, blindness in this verse is a reference to spiritual blindness. That is, whoever turns away from the signs of God in the mundane world, will not reap the benefits and reward of those who obey His commandments when they reach the permanent world. It also means that such a person will not have a light to guide him when he crosses the Bridge extending over Hell leading to Paradise.

TAFSĪR AND *TA'WĪL*

While we have seen so far that every word with a metaphorical connotation also has a literal connotation, the words *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* are no exception. *Tafsīr*, its linguistic synonym and origin is the word *fasr*, which means "clarification" and "exposing what has been covered up."[21] Jurjānī says in *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*, that "*Tafsīr* originally is 'exposure' and 'making manifest' [...]." As for the technical meaning of *tafsīr*, Jurjānī explains that: "With respect to scripture [it means]: clarifying—the meaning of the verse, its status, its background, and the reason about which it descended—with an expression that indicates it ostensibly."[22] As for *ta'wīl*, its linguistic meaning is "to return something." In technical usage, Jurjānī says regarding to scripture, it means, "diverting the phrase from its apparent meaning to a meaning that is plausible if the plausible meaning that he sees is in agreement with the Book and the Sunna."[23] Despite the difference in the literal meanings of the words *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*, in technical usage they are sometimes used synonymously, just as they are used distinctively. Tha'lab said:

> *Tafsīr* and *Ta'wīl* are one and the same, or it [*tafsīr*] is, "exposing the meaning of the problematic phrase," and

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[21] *Al-Misbāh al-Munīr*: 245.

[22] *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*: 63.

[23] Ibid., p.50

> *ta'wīl* is "referring one of the possible interpretations back to what conforms with the apparent meaning."[24]

What this means is that *tafsīr* is concerned with the definitions of problematic or strange words and phrases. This is like defining the word *sirāt* (path) with the word *tarīq* (path), or defining the unusual Qur'ānic word, *'izīn* (scattered groups) as groups scattered about. *Tafsīr* is also concerned with isolating a particular element of a general expression. This is like explaining God's saying: *He brings the living out of the dead* (Qur'ān 30: 19), that God intends to "bring the chicken from the egg," because an egg is lifeless and the chicken is not. This is a specific designation made from a general statement, although the number of living and dead things are many.

As for *ta'wīl* in its technical usage, it is more concerned with the meanings of phrases, and the non-apparent figurative usages of words. Jurjānī says about God's statement: *He brings the living out of the dead*, "If He meant 'bringing the bird out of the egg,' it is a *tafsīr*, and if He meant 'bringing the believer out of the non-believer' or 'the knowledgeable person out of the ignorant,' it is *ta'wīl*."[25] So what distinguishes *ta'wīl* from *tafsīr* is that *tafsīr* is "clarifying the meaning of a verse with a phrase that indicates that meaning directly," and *ta'wīl* is "clarifying a verse with a phrase that indicates that meaning indirectly."

TA'WĪL IN ITS MORE SPECIFIC SENSE

The standard definition of *ta'wīl* in the circles of the scholars of legal theory is, "Construing the apparent meaning according to the weaker possibility."[26] This definition encompasses the meanings of both the sound interpretation (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) and the corrupt interpretation (*fāsid*). An interpretation is considered corrupt when there is no justification for it. Our concern is with the sound interpretation, which is always justified by proof or indication.

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[24] *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*: 411.

[25] *Kitāb al-Ta'rīfāt*: 50.

[26] This definition is mentioned by Shawkānī in *Irshād al-Fuḥūl*: 2/44.

To allow us to distinguish this form of *ta'wīl* from the form that is corrupt we can add to the definition, "Construing the apparent meaning according to the weaker possibility due to evidence that makes the weaker stronger." This definition did not exist during the time of the Prophet and his companions, although the concept of *ta'wīl* did exist as a reality. As already mentioned, *ta'wīl* originally meant "to return something." As for its figurative usage during the era of the *Salaf*, it was synonymous with the words *tafsīr, ma'nā, madmūn*, and *fatwā*, which are interchangeable. So in its original sense, *ta'wīl* meant "the returning of something" while in its figurative sense it meant "the meaning of something," and it is this sense that is intended in God's saying: *And none know its ta'wīl except God* (Qur'ān 3: 6). That is, "No one knows its meaning except God." If we said that its meaning is derived by what the later theologians and jurisprudents agreed upon, it would be unintelligible, since its meaning would be, "And none knows its 'Construing of the apparent meaning according to the weaker possibility due to evidence that makes the weaker stronger' except God." And no one holds this view. We have said before that this last definition of *ta'wīl* did not exist during the time of the Prophet, despite the fact that the reality of *ta'wīl* did exist. We know that *ta'wīl* with this understanding existed because metaphor and figurative language existed, and metaphor and the reassignment of that metaphorical meaning to a word go hand in hand. Imām Abū Mansūr Māturīdī said:

> *Tafsir* is "declaring for certain that the meaning of the phrase is 'this' while testifying by God that He meant 'this' by the

phrase." So if decisive proof exists, it is sound. Otherwise it is an interpretation according to sheer opinion. And such a thing is forbidden. *Ta'wīl* is "to give more weight to one of the possibilities without making a declaration of certainty [about that interpretation] and without testifying by God [of one's confidence]."[27]

THE *MADHHAB* OF THE SALAF REGARDING THE *MUTASHĀBIHĀT*

Ibn Qudāma said:

> The *madhhab* of the *Salaf*, may God have mercy on them, is to believe in the attributes of God, Exalted in Highness, and His names by which He described Himself, in the verses of His revelation and upon the tongue of His messenger without adding to or subtracting from them, without transgressing [limits] against them, without explaining them (*tafsīr*), and not interpreting them (*ta'wīl*) in a way that contradicts their apparent meanings.[28]

He also said:

> And whatever of that is problematic, it is compulsory to affirm it as an expression, and to avoid delving into its meaning. We refer the knowledge of it to the one who said it, and place the burden on the one who conveyed it while following the path of those deeply rooted in knowledge who God extolled in His clear Book with His statement: *And those deeply rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it. All is from our Lord.'*[29]

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[27] *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān:* 4/460-464.

[28] *Dhamm al-Ta'wīl:* 11/6.

[29] *Sharh Lum'a al-'Itiqād ma'a sharh Shaykh al-Jibrīn:* 69.

Imām Suyūṭī said:

> Amongst the ambiguous are the verses of attributes [...] The majority of *Ahl al-Sunna*—with them are the *Salaf* and *Ahl al- Ḥadīth*[30] agree about believing in them and consigning (*tafwīd*) the meaning intended from them to God, Exalted in Highness. But we are not to explain them all the while exonerating Him from their literal meanings.[31]

And in his explanation of God's saying: *Then He became established on the Throne*, Ibn Kathīr writes that:

> People have a great many comments in this area. However, this is not the place to present them. Rather, we will pursue in this place the path of the Righteous Forebears, Mālik, Awzā'ī, Thawrī, Layth ibn Sa'd, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad, Isḥāq ibn Rahuwiyah, and others from the ancient Imāms of the Muslims and those more recently, which is to understand it as it has come without ascribing "howness" (*takyīf*), without striking a resemblance between Creator and the created (*tashbīh*), and without denying the Creator's true attributes (*ta'tīl*). The apparent meaning that appears at first glance to the minds of the Anthropomorphists is negated from God, Exalted in Highness, for verily nothing of His creation resembles Him: *There is nothing like unto Him. And He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing* (Qur'ān 7: 54).[32]

What we learn from the statements of these three great Imāms, is that the *madhhab* of the *Salaf* regarding the ambiguous verses was *tafwīd* or "consigning the meanings of the ambiguous verses to God." This is clearly conveyed in the statement of Ibn

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[30] One should note that "Ahl al- Ḥadīth" referred to by Imām Suyuti in this quote is not a reference to the modern-day sub-continental *Salafis*, who also go by this name. He is referring to the early Ḥanbalis who followed the traditional School of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, may God show him mercy, so one should not confuse the two.

[31] *Al-Itqān*: 3/13-14.

[32] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, (Dār al-Fayhā: Damascus, Dār al-Salām, Riyadh 1418/1998) 2/295

Qudāma, that "whatever of that is problematic, it is compulsory to affirm it as an expression and to leave delving into its meaning. We refer the knowledge of it to the one who said it." This, as we have seen already, is also confirmed by Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūti.

IBN TAYMIYYA'S OPINION OF TAFWID

Ibn Taymiyya writes concerning *tafwīd* (consigning the knowledge of the meanings to God) that:

> It is known that God commanded us to reflect upon the Qur'ān, and He urged us to comprehend and understand it. So how can it be possible that at the same time it is desired from us to shun understanding, knowing, and comprehending it?[33]

This opinion of Ibn Taymiyya is the result of a misunderstanding of the *madhhab* of *Tafwīd*.[34] It is as if he thought the proponents of *tafwīd* were implying that consigning the meanings to God meant denying even the apparent meanings of the ambiguous verses, so that one could not say that the apparent meaning of *yad* is "hand." His misconstruction of their understanding becomes clear when he says afterwards, that:

> In that case, what God used to describe Himself in the Qur'ān or much of what God used to describe Himself, the Prophets do not know its meaning. Rather they uttered a statement whose meaning they did not comprehend.[35]

What he failed to understand was that the intent of the proponents of *tafwīd* was that "the apparent meanings cannot apply to God." Therefore there must be from amongst the different figurative meanings, one that He specifically intended. From this regard, the words or phrases were considered ambiguous. This carries the implication that no one can determine which of the metaphorical meanings God intended. Rather it did not matter which one He intended, so long as no one attributed the literal meanings of these words to Him. If Ibn Taymiyya had understood this, he would not have made such statements as:

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[33] *Dar' Ta'ārud al-'Aql wa al-Naql*: 116-118.

[34] Or that he insisted on not accepting their definition of it.

[35] *Dar' Ta'ārud*: 116-118.

> So it has becomes clear that the people of *tafwīd* who claim that they are following the *Sunna* and the *Salaf* is one of the most wicked statements of the proponents of innovation and infidelity.[36]

Recalling the statements of the three Imāms concerning *tafwīd* and contrasting them with the above words of Ibn Taymiyya, it becomes clear that there was a conflict between him and the majority scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna* regarding the true *madhhab* of the *Salaf* and the ambiguous verses.

IBN TAYMIYYA'S VIEW OF THE *MADHHAB* OF THE *SALAF*

In Ibn Taymiyya's view the approach of the *Salaf* with respect to these verses was different in that they consigned the conditions or modalities of God's attributes to His knowledge as opposed to consigning the meanings of the ambiguous verses. We already mentioned the majority view regarding the *madhhab* of the *Salaf,* which was to consign the knowledge of the meanings of the ambiguous verses to God, Almighty. As for Ibn Taymiyya, he believed that the approach of the *Salaf* was to consign the condition of God's attributes to His knowledge. This means that he believed the hands, eyes, face, and other things mentioned in the Qur'ān to be attributes of God, but that His creation is ignorant of their particular conditions or modalities. Ibn Taymiyya proclaims that:

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[36] Ibid. 116-118.

> And likewise what God gave news about concerning Himself like His establishment on His Throne, His hearing, His seeing, His speech, and other than that. Undoubtedly, the condition (*kayfiyya*) of that, no one knows except God.[37]

The problem with this view of Ibn Taymiyya is that in order for him to affirm these objects to be attributes of God while acknowledging them to be ambiguous he would have to pause on the verse and reflect over it. This is contrary to the *madhhab* of the *Salaf* about which Ibn Kathīr said: "[...] It is to let them pass as they have come without striking a resemblance between Creator and the created (*tashbīh*), and without denying the Creator's true attributes (*ta'tīl*)."

God says: *And as for those who have deviation in their hearts, they follow what is ambiguous from it* (Qur'ān 3:7). So, the only way that one can follow something ambiguous would be to stop on it, reflect over it, deduce that it is an attribute of God, and then require everyone else to accept it, or be branded a deviant and accused of infidelity for not acknowledging such things to be attributes of God. Furthermore the word *kayfiyya* is not synonymous with the word *ta'wīl* as is shown in God's saying: *And none know its ta'wīl except God* (Qur'ān 3:7). However, the word *ma'nā* (meaning) is synonymous with *ta'wīl*. While we know that God has said that He has revealed "ambiguous verses," to accept Ibn Taymiyya's view, we would then have to accept that God also sent down ambiguous "attributes." God has said that: *He is the one who sent down to you the Book. From it are clear verses. They are the foundation of the Book. And others are ambiguous* (Qur'ān 3:7).

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[37] *Majmū al-Fatāwī*: 17/373.

WHAT LED IBN TAYMIYYA TO HIS VIEW?

What led Ibn Taymiyya to differ remarkably with the majority of scholars can be understood from what he wrote in his *Majmū' al-Fatāwi*. He writes that, "And some people say: 'Indeed, the apparent meaning [of the attribute verses] is not intended.'" He continues to say:

> This statement is an error either in word and meaning or in word but not in meaning. One way of explaining this error would be to say: "Verily the hand is a limb like the limbs of servants. And the apparent meaning of anger is 'the boiling of the heart to seek vengeance.' And the apparent indication of Him being in Heaven is that He is like water inside a container." So there is no doubt that whoever says, "Verily these characteristics and the like of them from the attributes of creatures and characteristics of created beings are not intended from the verses and *ḥadīths*," has spoken the truth and has done well, since *Ahl al-Sunna* is not in disagreement in that God, Exalted in Highness, has nothing like unto Him in His essence, His attributes, or in His actions. Rather, the majority of the *Ahl al-Sunna* amongst our comrades and others pronounces disbelief upon the Anthropomorphists. However the one who says this has erred in that he believes these definitions (of the words "hand," "anger," and "in Heaven") to be the apparent indication of these verses and ḥadīth, and he has related about the *Salaf* what they did not say. For verily the apparent meaning of any speech is "that of it which precedes to the healthy mind of he who understands in that language." And it being apparent may be the result of mere convention, just as it might be the result of the context of the statement. While these created characteristics that are impossible with respect to God, Exalted in Highness, are not what precedes to the minds of the believers. Rather "the hand" to them is like the knowledge, the power, and the essence. So just as our knowledge, our power, our life,

> our speech, and others of these attributes are accidents that indicate our createdness, it is impossible for God, Glory to Him, to be described by the like of them. Similarly, just as our hands, our faces, and the like are composite bodies hence being created, it is impossible for God, Exalted in Highness, to be described by the like of them.[38]

Looking closely at these comments, one realizes that Ibn Taymiyya had his own definition for the term *zāhir* (apparent). He defined it as, "That which precedes to the healthy mind of the one who understands in that language." So as long as this is how it is defined then these created characteristics that are impossible with respect to God, Exalted in Highness, are not what precedes to the mind of the believers. The problem with this is that the Qur'ān was revealed to both the believing and the non-believing Arab. If the apparent meaning of those words and phrases were what the believers understood from them only, then there could never had been a believer, because how could someone entertaining anthropomorphic beliefs about the Creator enter Islam while his faith is characterized by the exact thing that leads to his unbelief? As for his saying, "Rather 'the hand' to them (the believers) is like the knowledge (*al-'ilm*), the power (*al-qudrah*), and the essence (*al-dhat*)," one should not be deceived by this, because there is an enormous difference between the hand, and between knowledge, power, and essence. Knowledge, power, and the essence, are things that when they are mentioned, do not induce us to invoke something in our minds that have a likeness. This is because they are abstract attributes; they do not allow us to imagine what God looks like. As for the hand, foot, and face, these are things that produce within us a particular form and image, something which God is exonerated from possessing.

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[38] Ibid., 6/355-356.

It becomes quite clear from reading the work of Ibn al-Jawzī, that rather than deriving his understanding from the *Salaf*, Ibn Taymiyya's influence and sources for understanding the verses of attributes came elsewhere. And God knows best.

THE TRUE *MADHHAB* OF THE *SALAF*

The *madhhab* of the *Salaf* is the *madhhab* of *tafwīd*. It is to say what God said about His self, understanding that the literal indications that are characteristic of creation are not intended in His regard, while consigning the true figurative meaning of those words and phrases to the knowledge of The One who truly knows it. This does not mean that we change the original and apparent meaning of words. We still say "hand," "eye," "foot," "face," "descent," etc., except that we understand that all of these words and phrases are just part of the eloquence of the Arabic language, and we know that some loftier meaning is intended as long as we are free from idealizing God as sharing commonalities with His creation. The exact meaning does not matter, because we pay close attention to the context, and focus on what we can take from the verses and traditions that can be applied in our lives.

BIOGRAPHY OF IBN AL-JAWZĪ[39]

(510-597 AH/ 1116-1201CE)

'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥammādī ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ja'far ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Qāsim ibn al-Nadr ibn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Faqīh 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Faqīh al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Khalīfat Rasūl Allāh Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī al-Qurashī al-Taymī al-Bakrī al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanbalī (509/510-597) was, with Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Gīlānī, the Imām of Ḥanbalīs and foremost orator of kings and commoners in his time, whose gatherings reportedly reached one hundred thousand, a ḥadīth Master, philologist, commentator of Qur'ān, expert jurist, physician, and historian of superb character and exquisite manners.

Orphaned of his father at age three, Ibn al-Jawzī was raised by his aunt who later brought him to the ḥadīth scholar Ibn Nāṣir, his first Shaykh. He took ḥadīth from him as well as over eighty shaykhs and was teacher to his grandson Abū al-Muẓaffar Shams al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Farghal ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Baghdādī al-Ḥanafī—Sibt Ibn al-Jawzī—as well as some of the greatest Ḥanbalī ḥadīth Masters and jurists such as Muwaffaq al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma, Ibn al-Najjār, and Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī.

Although he did not consider himself an Ash'arī and even castigated Imām al-Ash'arī and his School in *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* in many places, Ibn al-Jawzī nevertheless took a staunch Ash'arī stance in doctrine in the same book, in his *Tafsīr* titled *Zād al-Ma'ād,* in *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbīh,* and in *Talbīs Iblīs* where he writes: "Common *Muḥaddiths* have understood in accordance with sensual perception that which is related to the attributes of the Originator, because they did not mingle with the Jurists whereby they might learn to interpret the ambiguous *(mutashābih)* in conformity with the unambiguous *(muḥkam).* In fact, we have seen in our times some of them compile books!"[40]

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[39] By G.F Haddad whose main source is al-Dhahabī's, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* (Fikr ed. 15:483-494 §5342).

He courageously denounced the anthropomorphism of his School in the interpretation of the Divine Attributes in this book which is also known as *al-Bāz al-Ashhab al-Munqaḍḍ 'alā Mukhalifī al-Madhhab* ("The Flaming Falcon Swooping Down on the Dissenters of the [Ḥanbalī] School"). Because of this, Ibn al-Jawzī was criticized by the Ḥanbalī and Ḥanbalī-leaning proponents of the views he lambasted, such as Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma and his grandson the ḥadīth Master, Sayf al-Dīn ibn al-Majd[41] as well as Ibn Taymiyya and his circle. Among them al-Dhahabī said: "May God have mercy on him and forgive him! Would that he had not probed figurative interpretation nor diverged from his Imām." Al-Dhahabī's words—God have mercy on him and forgive him! —are, of course, loaded assumptions that Ibn al-Jawzī had himself long since rejected as shown time and again in the *Daf'.* Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī also criticizes Ibn al-Jawzī and cites against him—without transmission chain—a long letter attributed to a Ḥanbalī Shaykh of unknown reliability by the name of Isḥāq ibn Muḥammad al-'Ilthī (d. 634).[42] Some went too far in criticizing him, such as Ibn Nuqṭa who said: "I never saw anyone relied upon in his Religion, knowledge, and reason, that approved of Ibn al-Jawzī." Al-Dhahabī responded: "If God approves of him then they are irrelevant!"

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[40] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs* (p. 111).

[41] On him see al-Dhahabī's *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāẓ* (4:1446).

[42] Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:205).

Ibn al-Jawzī was a prolific author of over seven hundred books according to the bibliographic catalog printed by Kuwait's Markaz al-Makhṭūṭāt wal-Turāth wal-Wathā'iq under the title *Mu'allafāt Ibn al-Jawzī* in 1992, among which al-Dhahabī lists the following:

- *Akhbār al-Nisā'*, an informative handbook for Muslim women in 110 brief chapters followed by biographical notices on sixty-six eminent Muslim women. The book was printed under the title *Aḥkām al-Nisa'*. In it Ibn al-Jawzī cites the following: The Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, is related to say: "I hate for a woman to be brazen *(salqā')* and bare-eyed *(marhā')*, wearing neither kohl on her eyes nor henna on her hands!"[43] 'Ā'isha, may God be pleased with her, is reported to say: "The Messenger of God ordered us [women] to comb through our hair in *ghusl* and completely dye our hands with henna lest they become dry and rough like men's hands."[44]
- *Dhikr al-Ḥuffāẓ;*
- *Faḍl Maqbarat Aḥmad,* on the benefits associated with Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's cemetary in Baghdād;
- *Ḥāl al-Ḥallāj,* "The Status of al-Ḥallāj," in which Ibn al-Jawzī reports that he had in his possession the autograph copy of a treatise of the Ḥanbalī ḥadīth Master Ibn 'Aqīl (d. 513) written in praise of al-Ḥallāj, entitled *Juz' fī Naṣr Karāmāt al-Ḥallāj* ("Opuscule in Praise of al-Ḥallāj's Miraculous Gifts"). Like other Ḥanbalī Ṣūfis such as al-Harawī al-Anṣārī (d. 481), Ibn Qudāma (d. 620) and al-Ṭūfī (d. 715), Ibn 'Aqīl considered al-Ḥallāj a Friend of God (*walī*) and did not doubt his sincerity and righteousness.

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[43] Narrated from 'Ā'isha by Ibn al-Jawzī without chain in *Aḥkām al-Nisa'* (p. 89).

[44] Ibid. Al-Haythamī said in *Majma' al-Zawā'id* (5:171): "Al-Ṭabarānī narrated it from Umm Layla in *al-Awsaṭ* and *al-Kabīr* (25:138) and its chain contains narrators I do not know." Also narrated from Umm Layla by Ibn Mandah–as stated by Ibn Ḥajar in *al-Iṣāba* (8:296)–and Ibn al-Mulaqqin in *Khulāṣat al-Badr al-Munīr* (1:358).

- *I'lām al-Aḥyā' bi-Aghlāṭ al-Iḥyā'* ("Informing the Living of the Mistakes of the *Iḥyā'*). A detractor of Ṣūfīs, Ibn al-Jawzī dismisses al-Ghazzālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* in four of his works: *I'lām al-Aḥyā', Talbīs Iblīs, al-Quṣṣās,*[45] and his great history, *al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wal-Umam.*[46] His views influenced Ibn Taymiyya and others. The basis of their position was also that al-Ghazzālī used too many weak or baseless ḥadīths. Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda said:

  > Our reliance is on God! Ibn al-Jawzī composed a great big book on ḥadīth forgeries [the *Mawḍū'āt*] so that jurists, preachers, and others may avoid them, then you will see him cite in his exhortative works forged ḥadīths and rejected stories without head nor tail, without shame or second thought. In the end one feels that Ibn al-Jawzī is two people and not one! [...] Hence Ibn al-Athīr blamed him in his history entitled *al-Kāmil* with the words: "Ibn al-Jawzī blamed him [al-Ghazzālī] for many things, among them his narration of unsound ḥadīths in his exhortations. O wonder that Ibn al-Jawzī should criticize him for that! For his own books and exhortative works are crammed full with them *(maḥshuwwun bihi wa-mamlū'un minh)!*"[47] And the ḥadīth Master al-Sakhāwī said in *Sharḥ al-Alfiyya*: "Ibn al-Jawzī cited forgeries and their likes in high abundance in his exhortative works."[48]

- *Al-Intiṣār fil-Khilafiyyāt* in two volumes, promoting the superiority of the Ḥanbalī School in matters of juridical divergence;
- *Al-Khaṭa' wal-Ṣawāb min Aḥādīth al-Shihāb,* on al-Quḍā'ī's *Musnad;*

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[45] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Quṣṣāṣ wal-Mudhakkirīn* (p. 201).

[46] Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam* (9:169).

[47] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fil-Tārīkh* (Dār Ṣādir ed. 10:228='Ilmiyya ed. 9:240).

[48] 'Abd al-Fattah Abū Ghudda, notes to al-Lacknawī's *al-Raf' wal-Takmil* (p. 420-421).

- *Al-Khawātīm;*
- *Manafi' al-Ṭibb,* a work on medicine;
- *Manāqib*, a series of books on the "immense merits" of the following: Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Alī, Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ, Bishr al-Ḥāfī, Rābi'at al-'Adawiyya, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Shāfi'ī, Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, and others.
- *Al-Manāsik;*
- *Al-Manfa'a fil-Madhāhib al-Arba'a* in two volumes, in comparative *fiqh;*
- *Mashhūr al-Masā'il* in two volumes;
- *Minhāj al-Qāṣidīn wa-Mufīd al-Ṣādiqīn* ("The Road of the Pursuers and the Instructor of the Truthful"), an abridgment of al-Ghazzālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*—which Ibn al-Jawzī excessively criticized—in which he carefully avoids the use of the terms *ṣūfī* and *taṣawwuf.* The *Minhāj* was epitomized in one volume by Najm al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Qudāma (d. 742). Here are some of its chapter-titles and excerpts most illustrative of Imām al-Ghazzālī's influence on Ibn al-Jawzī and of the latter's *de facto* adoption of Ṣūfī themes and terminology:
  - *Faṣl 'ilm aḥwāl al-qalb* (Section on the science of the states of the heart)
  - *Faṣl fil-ādāb al-bāṭina wal-ishāra ilā ādāb al-ḥajj* (On the ethics of the secrets of the Pilgrimage)
  - *Kitāb riyāḍat al-nafs wa tahdhīb al-khuluq wa mu'ālajat amrāḍ al-qalb* (Book of the training of the ego, the upbringing of the character, and the treating of the diseases of the heart)
  - *Faṣl fī fā'idat shahawāt al-nafs* (Section on the benefit of the appetites of the ego)

  - *Faṣl fī bayān ma yuḥbiṭu al-'amal min al-riyā' wamā lā yuḥbiṭ* (Section exposing the self-display which nullifies one's deeds and the self-display which does not)
  - *Faṣl fī dawā' al-riyā' wa-ṭarīqaṭu mu'ālajat al-qalbi fīh* (Section on the remedy of self-display and the way to treat the heart from its ill)
  - *Kitāb al-maḥabba wal-shawqi wal-unsi wal-riḍā* (Book of love, passionate longing, familiarity, and good pleasure)
  - *Faṣl fī bayān ma'nā al-shawq ilā Allāh ta'ālā* (Section exposing the meaning of passionate longing for God)
- *Al-Mughnī*, a massive Qur'ānic commentary which he abridged into *Zād al-Masīr;*
- *Al-Mukhtār fil-Ash'ār*, a ten-volume anthology of poetry;
- *Mukhtaṣar Funūn Ibn 'Aqīl* in over ten to twenty volumes;
- *Al-Muntaẓam fil-Tārīkh,* a ten-volume history of Islām in which he narrates with his chain from al-'Abbās ibn Ḥamza and Mūsā ibn 'Īsā respectively:

  > I prayed *ẓuhr* behind Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī. When he first wanted to raise his hands to say *Allāhū akbar* he was unable due to his great awe of the name of God Most High. His joints began to shake until I could hear the rattling of his bones, which shocked me [...] He would rebuke himself and say to his soul every morning: "You lair of every evil! A woman has menses then becomes pure again after three to ten days, but you, my soul! have been sitting for twenty and thirty years and not become pure yet. When will you clean yourself?"[49]

- *Al-Radd 'alā al-Muta'aṣṣib al-'Anīd al-Māni' min Dhammi Yazīd* ("Refutation of the Obdurate Sectarian Who Forbids the Blame of Yazīd") in which he asserts that the Ulema deemed it permissible to curse Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya[50]—together with al-Ḥajjāj—as did the Ḥanafīs Ḥāfiẓ al-Dīn al-Kurdī (who said it was preferable not to) and Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī.[51] Al-Haytamī in *al-Ṣawā'iq al-Muḥriqa* cited Ibn al-Jawzī's attribution of this position to Imām Aḥmad via Abū Ya'lā in his *Mu'tamad fil-Uṣūl,* the latter narrating it from Ṣāliḥ ibn Aḥmad, from the Imām.[52] However, Abū Muḥammad al-Tamīmī in his *'Aqīdat al-Imām Aḥmad* relates a contrary position from Imām Aḥmad as narrated by Abū Ya'lā's son in *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* and Ibn Mufliḥ in *al-Maqṣad al-Arshad:*

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[49] In Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam* (5:28-29).

> He [Imām Ahmad] withheld saying anything about Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya but rather committed his matter to God. He would refrain from speaking against anyone from the first century. But our [Ḥanbalī] colleagues differ concerning him [Yazīd]. Some declared it permissible to blame him because he terrified al-Madīna and the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, cursed whoever terrifies al-Madīna. Others withheld from taking any position. Imām Aḥmad was asked about it and he said: 'People prayed behind him and took his alms.' Others considered him among the Muslims that sinned and it is better to refrain from taking any position in what is not obligatory. It was impermissible to curse any Muslim unless the Law provided a proof-text to that effect. For it is narrated and transmitted that to

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[50] Al-Dhahabī said of Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya in *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* (4:37-38): "He was strong, brave, deliberative, full of resolve, acumen, and eloquence. He composed good poetry. He was a stern, harsh, and coarse Nāṣibī. He drank and was a reprobate. He inaugurated his *Dawla* with the killing of the *Shahīd* al-Ḥusayn and closed it with the catastrophe of al-Ḥarra (Madīna). Hence the people despised him, he was not blessed in his life, and many took up arms against him after al-Ḥusayn such as the people of Madīna–they rose for the sake of God–and Mirdās ibn Udayya al-Ḥanẓalī al-Baṣrī, Nāfi' ibn al-Azraq, Ṭawwāf ibn Mu'allā al- Sadūsī [three Khārijīs], and Ibn al-Zubayr in Makka."

[51] Cited by al-Munāwī in *Fayḍ al-Qadīr* (§281) cf. al-Taftazānī, *Sharh al-'Aqā'id al-Nasafiyya* (p. 117).

[52] Al-Haytamī, *al-Sawā'iq al-Muḥriqa* (p. 218-223).

curse a Muslim is like killing him and that the Believer is not one given to cursing.[53]

From the above it can be seen that the claim that "Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal permits that curses be pronounced against Yazīd"[54] is not correct even though he forbade narrating from him.[55] Nor is the claim of Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī correct that "Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's view is that Yazīd committed apostasy *(kufr)*" although he correctly goes on to state that "the majority of *Ahl al-Sunna* do not condone cursing Yazīd as his apostasy has not been definitely established."[56] Imām al-Ghazzālī also forbade the cursing of Yazīd, as did many early and late Ulema.[57] The rightly-guided Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz—God be well-pleased with him—reportedly would say *raḥimahullāh* after the name of Yazīd but when he heard a man call him "Amīr al-Mu'minīn" he had him lashed twenty times.[58] The refusal of Imām al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī—God be well-pleased with both of them—to declare allegiance to Yazīd is that of the generality of the Companions in Madīna and Makka including 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and the totality of the veterans of Badr. It was predicted by Abū Hurayra in many narrations pertaining to the Banū Umayya and to Yazīd specifically. Abū Hurayra decried the governor of Madīna Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam, warned of a terrible disaster about to befall the Arabs, and prayed for death before the year 60, the year Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya came to power, under whose rule three scandals took place: al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī was killed; Madīna was ransacked for three days during which the Companions were massacred, after which no survivor of the battle of Badr was left on earth and a thousand unmarried women gave birth to fatherless children; finally, the Kaʿba was destroyed and burnt, at which time Yazīd died.

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[53] Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Ṭabaqāt* (1:246, 2:273), al-Haytamī, *al-Ṣawā'iq* (2:635), Ibn Mufliḥ, *al-Maqṣad al-Arshad* (2:283).

[54] Claimed by al-Barzanjī in *al-Ishā'a fī Ashrāṭ al-Sā'a* (Shukrī ed. p. 77 and 144).

[55] Cf. *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (1:347) from Muhannā ibn Yaḥyā al-Shāmī.

[56] Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ al-Shifā* (2:556).

[57] Cf. *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (3:108); al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-Sādat al-Muttaqīn* (7:488); al-Damīrī's *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān*, section on the Caliphs (2:186); Ibn 'Ābidīn's *Ḥāshiya* (2:587); Gangohī's *Fatāwā Rashīdiyya* (1:3/26); 'Abd al-Ḥay al-Lacknawī's *Fatāwā* (1:36); al-Haytamī's *Fatāwā Ḥadīthiyya* (p. 270), etc.

[58] Narrated by Ibn Ḥajar in *Lisān al-Mīzān* (6:294).

- Abū Hurayra said: "Woe to the Arabs for a disaster that is fast approaching! The rule of young boys: if you obey them they shall enter you into the Fire, and if you disobey them they shall strike your necks with the sword."[59]
- ʿUmayr ibn Hāniʾ al-ʿAnasī narrated that Abū Hurayra used to walk in the marketplaces and say: "Hold on to the two temples of Muʿāwiya! O God, do not let me reach the year 60!"[60]
- "Seek refuge in God from the turn of the year 60 and from the rule of young boys" *(imārat al-ṣibyān)*. And he said: "The world will not pass before it first belongs to an abject fool son of an abject fool *(lukaʿ ibn lukaʿ)*."[61] Some versions have "and the rule of fools" *(imārat al-sufahāʾ)*.[62]
- The above reports show Abū Hurayra's familiarity with the report of Abū Saʿīd: "I heard the Messenger of God say: 'There will be, after sixty years, [*a later generation who have ruined*

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[59] Narrated by Ibn Abī Shayba.

[60] Narrated from ʿUmayr ibn Hāniʾ al-ʿAnasī by Ibn ʿAsākir in *Mukhtaṣar Tārīkh Dimashq* (29:206) and by Ibn Saʿd (4:340-341) as well as al-Bayhaqī in the *Dalāʾil*, al-Dhahabī in the *Siyar*, Ibn Ḥajar in *al-Iṣāba* (7:443), and Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāya* (6:228-229). "Hold on to the two temples of his head" *i.e.* love him while you still can, as his epigones will not be so lovable.

[61] Narrated from Abū Ṣāliḥ the *muʾadhdhin*, from Abū Hurayra by Aḥmad and Ibn Abī Shayba (7:461 §37235) with the number 70 cf. al-Haythamī (7:220) but cited by al-Suyūṭī in *Ziyādat al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr* (§2040) and the *Kanz* (§30854) with the number 60. Also – second sentence only – from Abū Hurayra, Hāniʾ ibn Nyār, and Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān by al-Tirmidhī *(ḥasan)* and Aḥmad with sound chains cf. *Fatḥ* (1:129-131).

[62] Cf. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd* (2:303) and al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awṭār* (9:167).

worship and have followed lusts. But they will meet deception (Qur'ān 19:59)]. Then there will be a later generation who recite Qur'ān but it will not reach beyond their throats. Three types will be reciting the Qur'ān [at that time]: the Believer, the hypocrite, and the open rebel."[63] Confirming the above is the famous saying of 'Alī at Ṣiffīn: "People! Do not loathe Mu'āwiya's leadership. If you were to lose him, you would see heads parting with their necks like colocynths *(kal-ḥanẓal)*!"[64] Al-Bayhaqī said: "'Alī and Abū Hurayra spoke such things only because they heard them from the Messenger of God."[65]

- "If I told you everything I knew, people would charge me with violating the law and they would say: Abū Hurayra is mad!" Another narration states: "You would have pelted me with dung."[66]
- 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ stood weeping before the Ka'ba which had been destroyed and burnt by the army of Ḥusayn ibn Numayr al-Sakūnī[67] in the year 63 and said: "People! By God, if Abū Hurayra had informed you that you would be fighting the grandson of your Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, and burn the House of your Lord, you would have said there is no worse liar than Abū Hurayra! And now you know, therefore, expect Divine revenge."[68]
- Abū Hurayra said: "I preserved from the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, two large vessels of

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[63] Narrated from Abū Sa'īd by Aḥmad, al-Bukhārī in *Khalq Af'āl al-'Ibād* (p. 117), al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ* (9:131), Ibn Ḥibbān (3:32 §755), and al-Ḥākim (1990 ed. 2:406 *ṣaḥīḥ* and 4:590 *isnād ṣaḥīḥ*), all "with a good strong chain meeting the *Sunan* criteria": Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya* (6:228) cf. al-Haythamī (6:231).

[64] Narrated from al-Sha'bī from al-Ḥārith al-A'war by Ibn Abī Shayba (7:548 §37854).

[65] Cited by Ibn Kathīr in *al-Bidāya* (6:228).

[66] Narrated by Ibn Sa'd (4:57, 2:119).

[67] Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya's general.

[68] Narrated from 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Sa'īd by Ibn 'Asākir in *Tārīkh Dimashq* (13:206) and cited by al-Dhahabī in the chapter on 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr in the Siyar (4:266).

knowledge. I disseminated the first one among the people. Were I to disseminate the second, my gullet would be cut."[69] Another version states: "I preserved three vessels, of which I disseminated two." Ibn Ḥajar said the gist of this is that Abū Hurayra disseminated more than what he kept secret. Thus the first vessel in the ḥadīth of al-Bukhārī is larger than the second.

- Abū Hurayra also narrated that the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, said: "Those who will destroy the people are this particular clan *(hādhā al-ḥayyu)* of the Quraysh." They said, "What do you order us to do, Messenger of God?" He replied: "If only the people stayed away from them *(law anna al-nāsa i'tazalūhum)*!"[70] This is precisely what Abū Dharr did. Ibn 'Umar similarly said: "I heard the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, say: 'This particular clan *(ḥayy)* of the Quraysh shall remain safe until they turn away from their Religion into apostates.' A man stood up saying: 'Messenger of God! Will I be in Paradise or in Hellfire?' The Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, answered, 'In Paradise.' Another stood asking the same, whereupon the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, answered, 'In Hellfire.' Then [he said], 'Say nothing to me as long as I say nothing to you. Were it not for fear that you would stop burying one another *(lawlā an lā tadāfanū)* I could certainly tell you about a great number of those who will be in the Fire and you would know who they are. If I am ordered to do it I shall certainly do it!'"[71]
- *Ṣayḍ al-Khāṭir* in three volumes containing aphorisms and wise counsels; among them:

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[69] Narrated by al-Bukhārī.

[70] Narrated by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and Aḥmad.

[71] Narrated from Ibn 'Umar by Abū Ya'lā (10:66 §5702) and, as part of a longer narration, by Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his *'Ilal* (2:256 §2262).

- "The Prophets went to great lengths in their affirmation [of the Attributes] so that the existence of the Creator would take a firm hold in the minds of the commonality [...] Once it is understood that the aim is affirmation and after we have been told matters that can be understood by the mind and similitude's with known things, and it is firmly established for us on a definite and unalterable principle that it is impermissible to attribute to Him whatever is perceived by the senses—at that time we know the purpose behind such affirmation."[72]
- "Our Law has clearly-defined principles and texts, well-guarded rules, and is free from both gaps and interpolations just as all the Divine dispensations are. The problem only enters at the hand of innovators in the Religion or the ignorant [...] All these [verses and ḥadīths], even if their outward expressions suggest likening God with creation, yet what is meant by them is the affirmation of His existence; and since the Law knows full well of the illusions that may arise in the hearts upon hearing them, it cut through these illusions by stating: *There is nothing whatsoever like Him* (Qur'ān 42:11)
- "Some of those said: 'God is not in the heaven, and it should not be said that He established Himself over the Throne, nor that He descends to the nearest heaven, rather, this is only His mercy,' thereby erasing from the hearts what must be affirmed in them. This is the contrary of what the Law demands. Others came and did not stop where the Law imposed a limit but applied their own judgments, saying: 'God is on the Throne' nor did they content themselves with His mere saying: *Then He established Himself over the Throne* (Qur'ān 57:4). Their

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[72] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* (p. 80-81).

predecessors buried hidden treasures for them and the heretics forged narrations for them. They did not understand what is permissible to apply to Him and what is impermissible, and so they affirmed His Attributes with those [forgeries]. But the vast majority of the sound narrations here were said on the basis of the width of expression of the Arabs, while they took them literally. They are like Juḥā[73] who, told by his mother to guard the door, took it off its hinges and walked away with it, whereupon the house was ransacked. When his mother blamed him he said: 'You only told me to watch the door, not the house!'

- "Then, after they imagined a huge image on the Throne, they took to interpreting away all that contradicts its being located on the Throne. For example His saying: 'and whoever comes to Me walking, I come to him running,'[74] concerning which they said: 'Coming near is not meant [literally], but only the nearness of rank and favor.' They also said that the statement of God that: *God should come unto them in the shadows of the clouds* (Qur'ān 2:210) must be understood literally to mean the coming of His very Essence! So they declare it permissible one year and they declare it forbidden another [...] And they narrate ḥadīths that would be rejected if they but pertained to the cancellation of *wuḍū'*, and their majority were forged by heretics, such as that narrated from 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr whereby 'God created the angels from the light of the two arms and the chest.' They said: 'We affirm this according to its external sense!' Then they placated the commonality by adding: 'But we do not affirm limbs.' It is as if they said: 'So-and-so is standing but he is not standing.' And they differ whether it should be said of God that He is sitting or standing, as in His saying: *standing firm on justice* (Qur'ān 3:18). Those are less intelligent than Juḥā,[75] for His statement: *standing firm on justice*, does not refer to standing but is only as if someone said: 'the emir stands for justice.'

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[73] A legendary wise fool in Arabic folk literature equivalent to the Turkish Naṣr al-Dīn Khwājā.

[74] Narrated from Abū Hurayra and Anas by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, and Aḥmad.

- "I mentioned some of their statements only so that one should not accept any of them. For caution against those people is worship. The only path is that of the *Salaf*, although I should also tell you that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said: 'A mark of a man's narrow knowledge is his imitation of other men in his religion.' So one should not, upon hearing that a great figure said something in the principles of the faith, imitate him. Whenever you hear that someone said something that does not conform with true and sound principles say: this comes from the narrator! [And also] because it has been firmly established, concerning that Imām, that he sometimes speaks on the basis of his own opinion. Therefore, even if we assess that it is authentically related from him, nevertheless he is not to be imitated in the principles of the faith – nor, for that matter, are Abū Bakr and 'Umar."[76]
- "I am appalled at certain people who claim to possess knowledge yet incline to anthropomorphism by explaining the ḥadīths according to their external meanings. If only they let those ḥadīths pass just as they came, they would be safe. For whoever lets pass what comes and proceeds without objection nor challenge, has said nothing whether for or against himself. But

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[75] The archetype of the wise fool in Arabic folk literature.

[76] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* (p. 91-95).

some people who have gaps in the Islamic sciences, deemed that to explain the words by other than the external sense was a kind of nullification *(ta'ṭīl)*. If they had understood the width of the Arabic language they would not have reached that conclusion [...]

- "It is the same with those of the *Ẓāhiriyya* who did not yield with unmitigated submission. For whoever reads the verses and ḥadīths [that pertain to the Attributes] and does not add anything, I do not blame him, and this is the way of the *Salaf;* but as for those who say: "The ḥadīth entails such-and-such," and "it is understood in such-and-such a sense," for example when they say: "He established Himself over the Throne with His Essence *(bi-dhātihi),*" and "He descends to the nearest heaven with His Essence *(bi-dhātihi).*" This is an addition which the one that says it has understood from the senses – not from the transmitted reports.
- "I am truly astonished at an Andalusian man called Ibn 'Abd al-Barr who wrote a book called *al-Tamhīd* in which he said that the ḥadīth of the descent to the nearest heaven "provides evidence that God is on the Throne, for if He were not so, there would be no meaning to the statement: 'He descends'." Now this is the statement of a man who is ignorant of the knowledge that pertains to God. He has extrapolated from his senses whatever he knows about the descent of material bodies and has made an analogy between it and the Deity. It is a far cry between the like of these and the adherents of Prophetic reports! Truly they have spoken in the worst terms ever used by those who practice figurative interpretation *(al-muta'awwilūn)*, then they have turned around and blamed the scholars of *kalām*!

- "Know, O seeker of right guidance! that reason and the transmitted evidence have long since provided us with two solid principles. Apply them to the totality of the Prophetic narrations. As for the transmitted evidence, it consists in the saying of God: *there is nothing whatsoever like unto Him*) (Qur'ān 42:11). Whoever firmly understands this will never describe Him in patently sensory terms. As for reason, it knows that the Creator is completely separate from created things and it can tell, from the fact that things are created, that they are in a state of change and subjected to external influences. So the Creator's pre-eternity *(qidam)* is also firmly established by this.
- "It is truly strange to see those who refuse to understand what we just said. Does not the authentic ḥadīth state that death shall be slaughtered between Paradise and Hellfire?[77] Does not reason, in this matter, act right in removing it from the literal sense when it is established among those who understand what death is, that it is an accident *('araḍ)* that necessitates the cessation of life—how then can death die? Should one ask: "What do you do with the ḥadīth?" Reason replies: "The ḥadīth strikes a similitude by setting up an image so that the concept may be learnt by means of that sensory image." If we tell it that it was narrated in the *Ṣaḥīḥ:* "Al-Baqara and Al 'Imrān shall come as if they were two great clouds"[78] it

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[77] Narrated from Abū Sa'īd and Ibn 'Umar by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, from Abū Hurayra and Abū Sa'īd by al-Tirmidhī *(ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ)*, and from Abū Sa'īd, Abū Hurayra, and Ibn 'Umar by Aḥmad.

[78] Narrated from Abū Umāma by Muslim, Aḥmad, Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Ḥākim and others with the wording: "Recite the Qur'ān, for verily, it shall come on the Day of Resurrection as an intercessor for its companions. Recite the two splendid ones, [Sūrat] al-Baqara and Sūrat Āl 'Imrān, for they shall come on the Day of Resurrection as if they were two great clouds or two flocks of gliding birds that take the defense of their friends. Read Sūrat al-Baqara for verily to take it is a blessing and to leave it

will answer: "Speech cannot be a cloud nor be compared to one." If we ask it: "Are you annulling the reports?" It will reply: "No. But it is only its reward that comes."[79] If we ask: "What is the proof that tells you to dismiss the external sense of the words?" It will reply: "My knowledge that speech does not resemble bodies and that death is not slaughtered like cattle. You know the vastness of the language of the Arabs. Are you so narrow-minded that you cannot bear to hear this?" The Ulema will answer: "You speak the truth, we hold the same position concerning the 'coming' of [Sūrat] al-Baqara and the 'slaughtering' of death." Reason shall then reply: "How strange of you! You have dismissed from [the concepts of] death and speech whatever meaning does not become them; how then do you not dismiss from [the concept of] the God that has no beginning, whatever necessarily entails a similitude between Him and His creatures in that above which He is established to be exalted?"[80]

- *Sibā Najd;*
- *Ṣifat al-Ṣafwa* in four volumes, an abridgment of Abū Nu'aym's compendium of Ṣūfīs titled *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā,* in which he cited al-Junayd as saying: "Of the marks of the

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is anguish. Sorcerers are powerless against it." Also narrated in the latter wording from Burayda by Aḥmad and al-Dārimī as part of a longer ḥadīth. It is also narrated from al-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān by Muslim, Aḥmad, and al-Tirmidhī *(gharīb)* that the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, said: "The Qur'ān shall be brought on the Day of Resurrection with its People, those who used to put it into practice, at their vanguard Sūrat al-Baqara and Āl 'Imrān." Al-Nawwās continued: "Then he struck three similitudes for them which I never forgot. He said they shall resemble two great clouds; or darkish shadows separated by a great light; or two great assemblies of gliding birds that shall defend their friends." Al-Tirmidhī said: "The meaning of this ḥadīth among the people of knowledge is that the reward of the Qur'ān shall come."

[79] As stated by al-Tirmidhī (cf. previous footnote).

[80] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* (p. 67-69).

wrath of God against a servant is that He makes him busy with what is of no concern to him";

- *Al-Tabṣira* in three volumes, on oratory;
- *Tadhkirat al-Arīb* on the Arabic language;
- *Tadhkirat al-Muntabih fī 'Uyūn al-Mushtabih;*
- *Al-Taḥqīq fī Masā'il al-Khilāf* in two volumes;
- *Taḥrīm al-Dubur;*
- *Taḥrīm al-Mut'a,* a work written against the Shi'ī rejection of the Prophetic prohibition of temporary marriage.
- *Talbīs Iblīs,* a work written against the Shi'a and the wayward among the Ṣūfīs and the jurists; al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar abridged it, expunging its many forgeries.
- *Talqīḥ al-Fuhūm;*
- *Al-'Uzla;*
- *Al-Wafā bi-Faḍā'il al-Muṣṭafā,* a large work on Prophetic biography and the immense merits of the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, in several hundred chapters. In the chapter concerning the Prophet's superiority, God bless him and grant him peace, over all other Prophets Ibn al-Jawzī states: "Part of the demonstration of his superiority to other Prophets is the fact that Ādam—upon him peace—asked his Lord through the sanctity *(ḥurma)* of Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him peace, that He relent towards him." The most authentic chain for this report is not that of al-Ḥākim's narration from 'Umar through 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd ibn Aslam who is weak *(da'īf)*, but that of Maysarat al-Fajr who narrates it as follows:

> I asked: "Messenger of God, when were you [first] a Prophet?" He replied: "When God created the earth *Then turned He to the heaven, and fashioned it as seven heavens* (Qur'ān 2:29) and created the Throne, He wrote on the Throne's leg: "Muḥammad the Messenger of

> God is the Seal of Prophets" *(Muḥammadun Rasūlullāhi Khātamu al-Anbiyā')*. Then God created the Garden in which He made Ādam and Eve dwell, and He wrote my name on the gates, its tree-leaves, its domes and tents, at a time when Ādam was still between the spirit and the body. When God I instilled life into him he looked at the Throne and saw my name, whereupon God informed him that "He [Muhammad] is the liege-lord of all your descendants." When Satan deceived them both, they repented and sought intercession to God with my name."[81]

- *Al-Wāhiyāt,* another title for *al-'Ilal al-Mutanāhiya;*
- *Wird al-Aghṣān fī Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān;*
- *Al-Wujūh wal-Naẓā'ir;*
- *Al-Yawāqīt,* a collection of sermons.

It was reproached to Ibn al-Jawzī that he wrote too much too fast without careful verification. Al-Dhahabī said: "We call Ibn al-Jawzī *ḥāfiẓ* (ḥadīth Master) in deference to the profusion of his writings, not to his scholarliness."[82] Abū al-Muẓaffar Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī [Jamal al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Farghal al-Baghdādī, a Rāfiḍī-leaning Ḥanafī according to al-Dhahabī] (d. 653) said:

> I heard my grandfather say from the pulpit: "With these two fingers of mine I wrote two thousand volumes; one hundred thousand [wayward Muslims] repented at my hands; and twenty thousand [non-Muslims] entered Islām." He used to recite the entire Qur'ān once a week and

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[81] Shaykh 'Abd Allāh al-Ghumārī cited it in *Murshid al-Ḥā'ir li-Bayān Waḍ' Ḥadīth Jābir* and said "its chain is good and strong" while in *al-Radd al-Muḥkam al-Matīn* (p. 138-139) he adds: "It is the strongest Companion-corroboration *(shāhid)* I saw for the ḥadīth of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Zayd" as quoted also by Shaykh Maḥmūd Mamdūḥ in *Raf' al-Minārа* (p. 248). The latter version is narrated in al-Ḥākim's *Mustadrak* with a very weak chain.

[82] See Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda's documentation of this aspect already cited.

> would not come out of his house except for *jum'a* or to the gathering.[83] [...] He had renounced the world and shared little in it [...] He never joked with anyone, nor jested with little boys, nor ate anything that came from parts the licitness of which he was unsure of.

Ibn al-Jawzī was severely tried toward the end of his life when his criticism of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Gīlānī—his senior of forty years—led to accusations made against him to the Sultan al-Nāṣir by the Shaykh's children and supporters. Thereupon Ibn al-Jawzī was publicly reviled, seized, and dragged away to jail while his house was sealed and his dependents dispersed. He was taken from Baġhdād to the city of Wāsiṭ where he remained imprisoned for five years during which he never once entered a *hammām*, patching up his own clothes and preparing his own food. Ibn al-Jawzī was released after his son Yūsuf succeeded in securing the intercession of the Caliph's mother in his favor. At that time the Imām was about eighty years old.

It was related that Ibn al-Jawzī was handsome, mild-mannered, with a melodious voice, of sweet company. He used to take care of his health and always try and improve his constitution and whatever stimulated his mind and sharpened it. He wore perfumed, fine white clothes. He had a sharp wit and was swift in his reply. As a result of drinking anacardium marsh nuts *(balādhur)*[84] early in life, his beard fell and remained very sparse, and he used to dye it black until he died. The week of his death he recited the following line:

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[83] At this point al-Dhahabī asks: "What about congregational prayer?" Yet it seems needless to say that Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī's statement takes it for granted, as the school of Imām Aḥmad considers obligatory prayer invalid unless offered in congregation if one has the ability.

[84] A strong but controversial stimulant of memory among the ḥadīth Masters, cf. al-Khaṭīb, al-Jāmi'(2:420-421 §1911).

> *kam kāna lī min majlisin law shubbihat*
> *ḥālatuhu latashabbahat bil-jannati*
> "How many a gathering of mine, if it compared to something,
> It would have compared to Paradise!"

His grandson related from his mother that on his death-bed Ibn al-Jawzī was heard repeating, addressing invisible visitors: "What do you want me to do with these peacocks?" (Birds of paradise.) He died between *maghrib* and *'ishā* on the night before *jum'a* the 13th of Ramaḍān. They used the wood shavings saved from sharpening his pencils to heat up the water before washing his remains before *fajr* and the people of Baghdād followed his bier to the cemetery of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal – God be well-pleased with him. The crowd was such that by the time his grave was reached it was time for *Jumu'a*. During the remainder of the month, people recited *khatmas* of the Qur'ān at his grave uninterruptedly, day and night. The night after Ibn al-Jawzī's burial the ḥadīth scholar Aḥmad ibn Salmān al-Sukr saw him in his sleep standing on a pulpit of pearl, preaching to the angels.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Daf‘ Shubah al-Tashbīh bi-Akaff al-Tanzīh

by

‘ABD AL-RAḤMĀN IBN AL-JAWZĪ

AL-MAKTABA AL-AZHARIYYA LI AL-TURĀTH'S INTRODUCTION

> *It is He who has sent down to you, [O Muḥammad], the Book; from it are verses, which are decisive—they are the foundation of the Book—and others are ambiguous. As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth], they will follow that of it which is ambiguous, seeking discord and seeking its meaning. And no one knows its [true] meaning except God. But those that are firm in knowledge say, "We believe in it"* (Qur'ān 3:7).

All praise belongs to God who guided us to a straight path through the declaration void of anthropomorphism and denial [of God's attributes]. And, may peace and blessings be upon our master, Muḥammad ﷺ who forbade the worship of idols and statues.

This is a book of Ibn al-Jawzī that a faction—like those the author refuted—concealed from us until now. They also concealed it from many of those who specialise in Arabic works, and they strove to efface its name and trace. The spread of the books of the anthropomorphists amongst the people—their manuscripts and publications, and the preoccupation of some writers with calling to anthropomorphism until the present day—induced me to publish it. It was also done out of eagerness to propagate the beneficial writings of Ibn al-Jawzī, and the enjoyable books of polemics.

And, the Ustādh Shaykh Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī—the guest of Cairo—commented on it. May God eternalise the benefit taken from him.

Author's Introduction

Know—may God, the Exalted, help you—that when I pursued the *madhhab* of Imām Aḥmad, may God, the Exalted, have mercy on him, I found him to be of great stature with respect to the sciences. He excelled in the study of the juridical sciences and the views of the predecessors (*Salaf*) to the point that not a single matter arises that he does not have a scriptural reference for or some form of remark to make. However, because he adheres to the approach of the *Salaf,* he only wrote what they transmitted. Therefore [it was only natural that] I found his *madhhab* void of the literary compositions whose kind was numerous amongst those [scholars] who follow a different approach [than him]. So, I wrote some detailed exegeses. Amongst them are: *al-Muġhnī* [that exists] in [several] volumes, *Zād al-Masīr, Tadhkirat al-Arīb,* and others.

Concerning the sciences of ḥadīth [I wrote a number of] books, among them are: *Jāmi' al-Masānīd, al-Hadā'iq, Naqī al-Naql,* and many books regarding *al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dīl* (the science of weighing positive and negative factors for evaluating the reliability of ḥadīth narrators). I have not found the Ḥanbalīs to have a single commentary in the topic of comparative *fiqh* except that al-Qādī Abū Ya'lā said: "I used to say, 'what is it with the advocates of the *madhhabs* that they mention the variance of those who have opposing views but they do not bother to mention the views of Aḥmad'[85] Then, I forgave them, since we

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[85] Imām Aḥmad kept the company of Abū Yūsuf at the start of his [scholastic] career as Yahyā ibn Ma'īn says about him in his book, *Ma'rifa al-Tārīkh wa al-'Ilal,* "I heard Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal say, 'I kept the company of Abū Yūsuf, and then I kept company with others after his time.'" Aḥmad used to preoccupy himself with the books of Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan and would extract some abstruse responses from them according to what al-Khatīb related with his chain of transmission to al-Harbī on his authority. He [also] accompanied many of the jurists of Iraq, and sat with Shāfi'ī during his second visit to Baghdad after the demise of Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan. So he acquired an ample portion of *fiqh*. Despite all of this, his greater focus and the focus of his disciples was upon the narration of ḥadīth. [In this regard] he did not follow the methodology of the jurists in the matters of *fiqh* [*al-tafrī'*], designating its sources, and elucidating the points of legality of judgments and assigning them [to their particular places] to the point that it was rare that he had a unique view and differed from those *fuqahā* who came before him in a particular ruling of *fiqh* (*fī al-furū'*). So if he differed with Shāfi'ī for example in anything from his new school

[Ḥanbalīs] do not have a single commentary on *fiqh*, so, I wrote a commentary for them."

[In spite of Abū Ya'lā's attempts,] in his commentary, he neither clarified what was *Ṣaḥīḥ* (rigorously authenticated) nor did he express contention with the rejected [sayings]. He also mentioned some irregular analogies,[86] and I witnessed one of our companions delivering a lesson while taking recourse to the commentaries of Istilām, As'ad, 'Āmili, and Sharīf while borrowing things from them [in spite of being unreliable sources]. So, I composed some commentaries for them such as: *Kitāb al-Insāf fī masā'il al-Khilāf* ("Impartiality About Matters of Disagreement"); *Jannat al-Nazar wa Junnat al-Fatr* ("Garden of Contemplation and Armour Against Fissure") and *'Umda*

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you would see him agreeing with Abū Ḥanīfa or one of his disciples or Mālik, may God be pleased with them. So the authors of the books of comparative *fiqh* found it negligible to mention the views of Aḥmad by simply mentioning the variance of the jurists who came before him. The recording of his views alongside the views of the other jurists in the books of comparative *fiqh* did not become widespread until the time of Ibn Hubayra al-Wazīr. When he published his *Ifsāh* and specified a sizable volume amongst its volumes to the variance of the four Imāms, he gave it complete attention, and strove to spread it by spending enormous sums, [so much so, that] those who wrote in the area of comparative *fiqh* began to mention the views of Aḥmad alongside the views of the other Imāms. Ibn Jarīr reached him in age and met his disciples, and despite that he did not mention his views in what he wrote regarding the variance of the jurists while mentioning those who were of the likes of Abū Bakr 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Kīsān Asamm. So the Ḥanbalīs asked him about that, and he said the like of which is: "Aḥmad was not one of the jurists. Rather he was from the people of ḥadīth. And since I did not meet him, I could not learn from him nor have I met any of his disciples who were worthy of learning anything from." So the agitation of the Ḥanbalīs was incited against him. Then what Yāqūt mentions in *Mu'jam al-Udabā* and Ibn Kathīr mentions in his *Kāmil* occurred [about that incident].

[86] Translator: A proper legal analogy cannot be applied if the reason justifying the ruling or point of legality is undiscerned. Amongst the conditions for determining the proper point of legality, is for the designated point of legality to be a description that is consistent throughout and suitable as a justification for the ruling being applied. When it happens that the determined point of legality is a description that is consistent throughout in all that it is being applied to, but is not suitable as a justification for the ruling–like saying that the reason that wine is forbidden is because it is wine, such a legal analogy is said to be irregular.

al-Dalā'il fī mashhūr al-Masā'il ("Reliance of All Proofs Regarding the Popular View of All Issues"). Then I deemed it appropriate to gather the ḥadīths of the commentary (of Qādī Abū Ya'lā) by which the advocates of the different *madhhabs* present as proof, and I clarified the basis for that which is sound and the point of contention in that which has been contested. I then composed a book about the [Ḥanbalī] *madhhab* that incorporated these ḥadīths, calling it *al-Bāz al-Ashhab al-Munqaḍḍ 'alā Mukhalifī al-Madhhab* ("The Flaming Falcon Swooping Down on the Dissenters of the [Ḥanbalī] School"). In the science of the branches of *fiqh,* I wrote *Kitāb al-Mudhhib fī al-Madhhab* ("The Gilder Regarding the Madhhab"), *Masbūk al-Dhahab* ("Moulding Gold") and *al-Bulġha* ("The Means of Subsistence"). In the fundamentals of the religion, I wrote *Minhāj al-Wusūl ilā 'ilm al-Usūl* ("The Way of Reaching Knowledge of the Religious Fundamentals"). In total, so far I have written some 250 works.

I have observed that some of our companions have written about matters of creed in a way that is not proper. There are three in particular: Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Hāmid,[87] his disciple, Qādī Abū Ya'lā,[88] and Ibn al-Zāghūnī,[89] who composed books by which they have disgraced the *madhhab*. They held the attributes of God to be subject to human understanding and perception. They heard that God, Glorified and Exalted be He, created Adam on his[90] image, upon him be blessing and peace. On that basis, they acknowledged for Him an image and a physical form, a face attributable to His Essence, two eyes, a mouth, uvulas, molar teeth, and lights for His face which represent His majestic splendor, two hands, fingers, a palm, a little [pinky] finger, a thumb, a chest, a thigh, two shins, and two feet. [They even went so far as saying]: "We have not heard any mention of the head." They [then] said: "It is possible for Him to touch and to be touched, and to bring the slave close to His being." One of them said: "[...] He breathes." Then they calm the common people by saying: "[These attributes] are not taken as commonly understood."

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[87] He is the Shaykh of the Ḥanbalīs, Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Hasan ibn Hāmid ibn 'Alī al-Baġhdādī al-Warrāq who died in the year 403. He was one of their greatest authors. His *Sharh Usūl al-Dīn* contains serious errors some of which the author will mention. Qādī Abū Ya'lā was trained by him.

[88] He is Qādī Abū Ya'lā Muḥammad ibn al-Husain ibn Muḥammad ibn Khalf ibn al-Farrā al- Ḥanbalī who died in the year 458. According to Ibn al-Athīr and Abū al-Fidā, they reported that Abū Muḥammad al-Tamīmī said concerning him "Abū Ya'lā has severely disgraced the *madhhab.* The waters of the oceans cannot wash it away." In his *Tabaqāt,* Qādī Abū Ya'lā attributed to Imām Aḥmad unspeakable things, far from being true. Ibn Badrān Dushtī reported in the section of "Comfirming the Limit" from *Kitāb al-Usūl* of Abū Ya'lā what is more horrid than what the author will report about him in "al-Tashbīh" along with a clash occurring between exoneration and anthropomorphism in his statements. It is no secret to the observer that he is not the Abū Ya'lā Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Mawsilī, the author of *al-Musnad,* and narrator of the books of Abū Yūsuf from Bishr ibn al-Walīd.

[89] He is Abū al-Hasan 'Alī ibn 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Nasr Zāghūnī al- Ḥanbalī who died in the year 527. He is one of the shaykhs of the author. In his *Kitāb al-Īdāh* he has some striking points of anthropomorphism that will dumbfound the astute person.

They adopted the literal meanings of the names and ascriptions and called them *attributes*—an invented designation, of which they have no evidence, neither from transmitted knowledge of the text, nor reason. They did not carefully consider those texts that divert one's attention from adopting the literal meanings [of such expressions] to adopting those meanings that must necessarily apply to God, just as [they did not carefully consider] to negate the meanings implied by those literal expressions that are characteristics of finite beings. They were not satisfied with saying, "[It is] an attribute of action" until they said, "[It is] an attribute of the [divine] essence [of God]." Once they determined those [words] to be attributes, they said, "We do not understand them according to the usages they imply according to language" like hand for 'blessing' and 'power' and coming/arriving to mean 'goodness' and 'kindness,' nor shin to mean 'severity.'" "Rather," they said, "We hold and understand them according to their well-acknowledged literal meanings," while the apparent and literal meaning is what is familiar of human characteristics.

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[90] Translator: This ḥadīth with be discussed in greater detail later on. It would suffice to say here that the word "his" in the ḥadīth "Verily God created Adam in his image" is unclear. If it is a reference to God–it would mean "God's image," and if it was in reference to Adam–it would be Adam's image. This ḥadīth is considered *mutashabih*. The traditional view is that "his" is in reference to Adam, upon whom be peace.

But any text [of the Qur'ān and Sunna] is only held according to its literal meaning when it is possible and feasible. If something would redirect or negate this being done, it is understood and held according to its figurative understanding. They then become offended when they are accused of likening God to His creation and show harshness towards anyone who says this to them, while in the same breath, insisting, "We are *Ahl al-Sunna,*" (People of the way of the Prophet) although in their statements they are clearly likening God to His creation.

There are some common people that have begun to follow them and I have advised them by saying, "Companions! Brothers! You are the People who adhere to the texts and follow them. This was the example of your Imām, the Greatest Imām, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, may God, Exalted be He, have mercy on him, who under pain of torture, proclaimed, 'How can I say what has not been said before?'"[91] So, take care not to introduce into his *madhhab* what does not belong in it. Then, you [three] said about the ḥadīths [of attributes] "We hold them and understand them according to their apparent meanings," while the apparent meaning of [this word] 'the foot' would be the human limb. This is the same thing as what is said and believed by the Chrsitians, may God, Exalted be He, distance them from His mercy [for saying such], about Jesus, upon him be blessing and peace. They understand that he is "God's spirit" and that God, Sanctified and Exalted in Highness, has an attribute known as a spirit that entered into Mary.

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[91] Khallāl mentioned in *al-Sunna* with his chain of narration to Ḥanbal on the authority of His paternal uncle, Imām Aḥmad, that when Imām Aḥmad was questioned about the ḥadīths of the descent, the seeing, the placing of the foot and the like, he said concerning them that, "We believe in them, we declare them to be true, without how and [without] a meaning." When asked about the establishment, he also said, "He became established on the Throne how He pleased and as He pleased without [having] limitation or a description that could be understood." This is consignment [of its meaning to God] and exoneration as is the approach of the *Salaf.* Sometimes Imām Aḥmad would use *ta'wīl* (figurative interpretation) in some places as Ḥanbal also narrated on the authority of Imām Aḥmad that he heard him say, "They made an argument against me on the day of the debate [during his famous inquisition by the rulers of his time]. They said: "*Sūrat al-Baqara* will come on the Day of Resurrection and *Sūrat Tabārak* will come." Imām Aḥmad said: "So I said to them: 'It is merely the reward. God, Splendid is His mention, said: *And your Lord comes and the angels rank upon rank* (Qur'ān 89: 22) and this means that

Whoever says, "He became established with His divine Essence" has made Him, Sanctified and Exalted is He, subject to reality, as we understand it.[92] It should not be neglected by anyone that the principle by which the faith is established is reason,[93] and it is by way of this [reason] that we came to know and hold God to be Eternal without beginning. If only you had said, "We read the ḥadīths, and [then] keep silent," then no one would have objected to [what] you [do]! [But you refuse to abstain from holding the texts and understanding them according to the apparent meaning] and this behaviour is absolutely disgusting

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His power will come." Ibn Ḥazm al-Ẓāhirī said in his *Fasl*, "It has been related to us about Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, may God show him mercy, that he said concerning: *And your Lord comes*, "Its meaning is: 'And the command of your Lord comes.'" This [here] is figurative interpretation and exoneration as is the approach of the generations directly after the *Salaf*. As for what has been reported about Imām Aḥmad that contradicts what has preceded, it is a fabrication of an ignorant friend and a faulty understanding of the view of Imām Aḥmad.

[92] This is due to the fact that "establishment" for humans is always understood in the sense of sitting. Those who would say that God, literally in His Essence, is on the Throne would therefore be affirming that God is held, carried, borne, and sitting or some other human act.

[93] Translator: Here he is making a reference to the rule determined by the scholars of *Uṣūl al-Dīn* which says, "Reason is a root for revealed knowledge. So raising contention with reason would be to raise contention with revealed knowledge. And contention with the root to correct the branch necessitates contention with both of them together."

and repugnant.[94] So, do not introduce in the *madhhab* of this righteous *Salafī* [95] man what does not belong to it. You have made this *madhhab* such a shameful disgrace that when it is said, "Ḥanbalī," it is understood that he is someone who likens God to His creation. You have then made your way to be that of bigotry and intolerance, showing fanatical support for Yazīd ibn

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[94] While commenting on [a book entitled] *al-'Adudiyya*, Ustādh Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh, may God show him mercy, in discussing the ḥadīth about the dispersion of the Umma [into 73 sects], said, "So if you said: 'Surely the speech of God and the speech of the Prophet ﷺ is composed of Arabic expressions and its indications are known to the scholars of language,' it is therefore compulsory to hold by the true indication of the expression whatever the case may be," I would say: "If that is so, then there would be none who are saved but the literalist party of Anthropomorphists who deem it obligatory to adopt all of the unambiguous texts and to abandon research altogether, despite the disarray found in the opinions of this faction, which is not hidden. Despite their pursuit of a path that does not produce certainty in any way. Verily there are occasions for the different addresses that appear in accordance with them. So there is no other way but to employ research and to interpret (*ta'wīl*) what reveals an imperfection–by its appearance–to what produces perfection. And when the interpretation proves true regarding something because of the evidence, it holds true regarding the remainder of things whereas no distinction can be made between one proof and another, or one expression and another."

Translator: Apparently, what Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh means here is that, if the Arabic language is composed of both literal and non-literal expressions, and the Qur'ān is in the Arabic language then, it would by extension mean that the Qur'ān is composed of literal and non-literal expressions. Furthermore, it would be permissible to say that if one expression mentioned in the Qur'ān (which could also be applied to other than God) is taken to be figurative, then a similar expression refered to God can also be taken to be figurative. An example of this is God's saying: *And lower to them the wing of degredation out of mercy* (Qur'ān 17: 24). Since no one acknowledges this to mean that man has a wing, one should also not deduce from God's saying: *God's hand is over their hands* (Qur'ān 48: 10) that He has a hand. Both are expressions open to interpretation, and as thus, one cannot determine for certain what exactly is intended by them. The duty of the believer is to cling to the portions of those verses and ḥadīths that contain injunctions subject to being applied in one's everyday life. If the interpretation of a text does not help bring us closer to God, there is no benefit in trying to assign to it what cannot be for a surety. And God knows best.

[95] Translator: Imām Aḥmad was a *Salafī* Imām. This merely means that he avoided the interpretation of those verses and ḥadīths which leave an impression that God resembles His creation and has a body or body parts unless it was absolutely necessary as when it is feared that someone will apply them literally to God. This was the way of the *saḥāba* in general and the *tābi'ūn*. It does not mean that Imām Aḥmad called himself *Salafī*, although he was refered to as such by the author.

Mu'āwiya, when you well know that the founder of the *madhhab* permitted cursing him.[96] And, Abū Muḥammad Tamīmī[97] used to say about one of your Imāms, that "[he] has disgraced the *madhhab* in a terrible way and it will not be cleansed until the Day of Resurrection."

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[96] Translator: Qādī Abū Bakr Ibn al-'Arabī writes in *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, "As for the specific sinner, it is not permissible to curse him by agreement, because of what has been related about the Prophet ﷺ. A drunkard was brought to him a number of times and one of those present said: "What is wrong with him? May God curse him! How many times has he come into your presence?!" Then the Prophet ﷺ said: "Do not be supporters of Satan against your brother!" So he gave to him the sanctity of brotherhood, and this necessitates compassion. This is a sound ḥadīth. As for cursing the non-specific sinner, it is the third issue: It is permissible by unanimous consensus, because of what has been related in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* [of Bukharī] about the Prophet ﷺ who said: "May God curse the thief. He steals the egg and has his hand cut off" (Qur'ān 2:161). What we notice in the words of Ibn al-'Arabī is that when he makes mention of the agreement about the impermissibilty of cursing the specific sinful Muslim, he uses the term for agreement, 'اتفاق,' (*ittifāq*) which is usually used to indicate that a difference of opinion does exist but because there is so little discrepancy, little consideration is given to it. Based on what Ibn al-Jawzī mentioned concerning the view of Imām Aḥmad, one could conclude that his was the one isolated view that kept Ibn al-'Arabī from claiming unanimous agreement on the subject, which is indicated by the term, consensus (*ijmā'*). And God knows best. Whatever the case, the Ḥanbalīs were sharply divided over the matter of Yazīd. Some of them were staunch defenders of him and did not agree with the claim that Imām Aḥmad permitted cursing him. Others, like Ibn al-Jawzī, rejected and repudiated Yazīd for his behavior. A third faction of the Ḥanbalīs, remained neutral on the subject.

[97] Translator: Swartz mentions that he was Rizq Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Tamimi. He states that he was "an influential and well-connected member of the Ḥanbalī school of Baghdad whom Ibn al-Jawzī clearly held in high regard." For biographical details, see *Tabaqat al- Ḥanabila*, II, 250-251; *Muntazam*, IX, 88-89; *Dhayl*, I, 77-85, *Kamil*, X, 253; *Shadarat*, III, 384; and Ibn al-Jawzī, *Manaqib Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal*, 525. See Merlin Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism* (Brill: Lieden, 2002) p. 125, footnote 181.

CHAPTER 1

ERRORS OF THE AFOREMENTIONED ḤANBALĪS

After examination, it can be seen that the scholars we have been discussing erred in seven matters:

The first issue is that they called many of the ḥadīths "Information on Attributes." However, they are merely possessive forms, while not every possessive form is an attribute.[98] For surely, God, Exalted in Highness, said: [...] *and, I have blown into him from My spirit* (Qur'ān 15: 29). And [know that] God does not have an attribute called "a spirit." So he who has called the possessive form an attribute is guilty of innovation.[99]

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[98] Translator: What Ibn al-Jawzī is referring to, is that at times, God mentions things in the Qur'ān that He annexes to Himself, but are not from His essence, His Attributes or His doings. For example, God has spoken about *The she-camel of God* (Qur'ān 7: 73 and 91: 13). No one should think that by reading this, God is riding the she-camel, or that it is from God's essence, His Names or His Attributes. Rather, it is being attributed to Him by terms of possession and honour. The same could be said of the naming of the Ka'ba as the "House of God." No Muslim believes that God lives there or that it is His permanent abode, but rather, the possessive form of God connecting it to Himself is out of honor and that it is in His Possession as He is its Creator and Maintainer. This same form would exist in English if someone states, "John's house and car." No one would assume that the car or the house is part of John or that it is an attribute, but rather it belongs to John or it is something that is attributed to John due to honor.

[99] Translator: Ibn al-Jawzī highlights that each matter that the anthropomorphists referred to as being an attribute of God exists in the Qur'ān or the Sunna in the "construct phrase" or "possessive form" usually translated as "The ___of ___" or "The____'s_____," like "The hand of God" or "God's hand." They made the mistake of assuming that this made the particular limb an attribute of God, since many times the meaning being expressed in the construct phrase is the meaning expressing a relationship of possession or ownership. However, this is a mistake since it would also have to be said that God has a spirit, a house in which He lives, and a camel that He rides, as these are also annexed to His name or pronoun in places in the Book of

The second error is that they said, "These ḥadīths are amongst the ambiguous [and] none know [the true meaning] except God, Exalted be He." However, at the same time they state, "We bear and understand them according to their literal meanings." How Astonishing! A phrase whose meaning only God knows [for certain], what literal meaning does it have? What then are the literal meanings of *al-istiwā* (establishment) except "sitting" and *al-nuzūl* (descending) anything but moving from one place to another?

The third error is that they affirmed Attributes as belonging to God [that are not established by decisive evidence]. The attributes of The One True God, Splendid in His Majesty, are only affirmed by the decisive proofs, by which the essence is affirmed.[100]

The fourth error is that they do not differentiate between affirming what is contained in a well-known report (a ḥadīth whose narrators are between three or four), like [the Prophet's] saying, "He, Exalted in Highness, descends to the sky of the lower world," and affirming what is present in a ḥadīth that is not

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God and the Sunna. This is why Ibn al-Jawzī chose to call them "information on the attributes" or "the annexed reports," rather than "verses on the attributes" as many scholars have chosen the latter expression.

[100] Translator: Evidence is decisive when its manner of transmission is concurrent (*mutawātir*) and the wording of the report is not open to interpretation (*sarīh*). This is like God's saying: *Verily God is Self-Sufficient, Worthy of all praise* (Qur'ān 14: 8) and: *God's hand is over their hand* (Qur'ān: 10). The former verse is clear and decisive, not subject to interpretation. The latter verse in ambiguous because it gives the impression that God has a hand, which happens to be a limb that facilitates for human beings the performance of a variety of tasks, while it can also be taken to be a metaphor indicating power, aid, and assistance. As for the first verse, every Muslim is obliged by it to believe that God has the attribute of "self-sufficiency," while the second verse obliges nothing more than to believe that God said: *God's hand is over their hand.* No one can coerce a Muslim by this verse to believe or say that God has a physical hand, just as one cannot force another to say that God does not have a hand. This is because God's attributes must be conveyed in a manner wherein all doubt is removed that it is one of His attributes, in addition to being conveyed in a way that removes all doubt that the transmitters might have agreed upon the transmission of a lie.

sound, like his saying, "I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form." Rather, they affirmed an attribute using the former [ḥadīth] and also by using the latter ḥadīth, [which is not a valid approach].

The fifth error is that they did not make a distinction between a ḥadīth attributed to the Prophet ﷺ and a ḥadīth designated to a companion or successor.[101] Thus they affirm the second ḥadīth as if it belongs to the same category as the ḥadīth mentioned before it.

The sixth error is that they make it a point to interpret (*ta'wīl*) in some instances and object to do so in others. For example, [In the ḥadīth *Qudsi*, it states] [...] "Whoever comes to me walking [at a normal pace] I will come to him walking [quickly]"[102] to which they say, "He struck the similitude to figuratively express the benevolence He shows to His creatures," but in other reports, they insist on the literal meaning.

The seventh error is that they understand the ḥadīths according to human perception. They said, "He descends with His essence, relocates from place to place, and shifts," but then falsely state, "But not as we think." So, they confuse whoever should hear them and they insult the senses and human intelligence by holding the hādīths on meanings according to human perception.

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[101] Translator: The reason that it is not permissible to use the statement of a companion or successor to establish an attribute for God is that only the Prophet ﷺ has the right and authority to legislate and speak authoritatively about the Creator. In the absence of his approval, the statements of his companions are not binding, due to the fact that their views about the revelation are subject to error. However, if a statement made by a companion and successor is free of opposition from any of their peers and does not contradict any authoritative source or statement of another companion or successor it is then considered binding upon all to believe, according to the scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna*.

[102] *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī (13: 325 and 328) and *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Muslim (#2675).

It is for this reason that I considered it necessary [to answer the doubts raised by them, and] to refute them so that things such as this could not be attributed to Imām Aḥmad, may God have mercy on him. Had I remained silent, it would have been said that these things are likewise a part of my creed. [To delve into] a matter so serious to people does not frighten me, because all are expected to act in accordance with the evidence [and God has blessed me with ample proof] to understand when it comes to knowing [the signs and attributes] of the The One True God, Exalted be He. Uncritical imitation of a scholar without knowing his evidence is not allowed in that area.[103]

Imām Aḥmad, may God have mercy on him, was once asked about an issue, and he gave a legal verdict regarding it. When it was then said, "Ibn al-Mubārak does not hold this view," he replied, "Ibn al-Mubārak did not descend from Heaven." Imām Shāfi'ī, may God have mercy on him, said, "I asked God to guide me to the right choice in refuting Imām Mālik, may God have mercy on him."[104]

Since these three [Ḥanbalī scholars] wrote their books, and Qadī [Abū Ya'lā] took it upon himself to document the [relative] ḥadīths [in his book], I have mentioned them according to his arrangement, and I prefaced them with the noble verses that have come in that regard.

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[103] Translator: *Taqlīd* in *fiqh* is compulsory for all who do not fulfill the conditions of absolute *ijtihād* (scholarly endeavor; competence to infer expert legal rulings). The view of most scholars is that *taqlīd* is impermissible in the area of creed (*'aqīda),* and specifically in those matters that relate to the character of God. In this regard we find the statement attributed to 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, "Let no one subject his religion to the blind imitation of a person. If he believes, he will believe. And if he disbelieves, he will [also] disbelieve." Imām al-Haramayn says in his *Shāmil,* "None have adopted the view that *taqlīd* in creedal matters (*uṣūl*) is permissible except for the Ḥanbalīs." Imām Abū Isḥāq Isfarāyīnī said, "Only the literalists are in opposition to it (the impermissibility of *taqlīd* in creedal matters). See *Irshād al-Fuḥūl*: 2/348; also refer to *Rawda al-Nāzir*: 382, Musawwda: 458, 460, *Ihkām al-Ahkām* of Āmidī: 4/446, and *Fawātih al-Rahamūt*: 2/643-645.

[104] Translator: The point that Ibn al-Jawzī is demonstrating with these quotes is that these scholars submitted to the strength of evidence, not men, especially with regard to knowing the attributes of God

What is mentioned in the Glorious Qur'ān about the subject?

God, Glorified and Exalted be He, said: *And the face of your Lord will remain* (Qur'ān 55: 7).[105] The exegetes explain [this to mean], "Your Lord will remain." Likewise, they said about His saying, Exalted in Highness: *They seek His face* (Qur'ān 6: 52) to mean: "They seek Him." Dahhāk and Abū 'Ubayda said [concerning] *Every thing will perish except His face* (Qur'ān 28: 88), to mean, "[Everything will perish] that is, except Him."

Those we have raised objection to, hold the view that the face is an attribute characterized by a special name added to the essence. What proof do they have to claim this, when they have no point of reference except what they know taken from human understanding and perception? By giving descriptions and understandings such as these, they [in turn] necessitate the ascription of parts [to God]. If their understanding were taken to its absolute ending, the verse would mean that His Entire Essence would perish except for His face. Ibn Hāmid said, "We do indeed affirm for God, Exalted be He, a face, but it is impermissible to affirm a head for him." My body shudders at the thought of someone being so bold as to mention such a thing. As he had already likened God with His Creation, what prevented him from likening [everything] but the head?!

Another [example of their approach is their understanding of His Words], Exalted be He: *And, so that you will be brought up on My eye* (Qur'ān 20: 39) and: *Make the ark under Our eyes* (Qur'ān 11: 37).[106] That is [to say], "In a place of view from Us." He placed

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[105] Zamakhsharī said in *al-Kashshāf*, "*The face of your Lord* is His being. The face is used to express the whole being and the essence. The indigents of Makkah would say: 'Where is a noble Arab face that will rescue me from degradation?'"

[106] Zamakhsharī says, "*in our Eyes* is [mentioned] in the place of a noun of circumstance with the meaning 'make it while being protected.' Its true meaning is '[do it] while

[the pronoun "Our"] in the plural only because the custom of the king is to say, "We commanded and we forbade." But, Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] held the view that the eye is an attribute added to the essence, while Abū Bakr ibn Khuzayma[107] preceded him in this matter. When commenting about the verse, he (Ibn Khuzayma) said, "Our Lord has two eyes by which He sees." Ibn Ḥāmid has also stated, "It is compulsory to believe that He has two eyes."

This [understanding] is an innovation for which they have no evidence! Similarly, they affirmed the eyes from mere contrast indication[108] from his saying ﷺ "He is not one-eyed."[109] But, the only thing intended [in this case] was to negate imperfection from Him, Exalted be He. Furthermore, when it is established that He does not divide into sections, there is no basis for what is imagined to be attributes.

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being clothed with Our eyes.' It is as if God has eyes with him that escort him so that he does not stray in his work from the correct manner [of building], and so that none of his enemies would come between him and his work." Rāzī says in *Asās al-Taqdīs* while discussing the "eye,": "Employing *ta'wīl* is unavoidable. That is to construe these words to mean 'greatness of care and supervision.' The 'face' as part of the beauty of the metaphor is stated to indicate that whoever cares, inclines toward, and desires a thing immensely, stares at it much [which is something done with the face]. So the word 'eye' that is an instrument for that staring, was an indirection expression employed to mean 'the greatness of care.'"

[107] He is Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Khuzayma al-Nīsāpurī who died in the year 311. He is considered as one of the greatest scholars of ḥadīth. He avoided from indulging in matters of speculative theology and he would forbid his disciples from doing so. When some of the theoreticians forced him to enter into these [dangerously] critical matters his foot slipped and he came up with some unintelligible interpretations. May God pardon him!

[108] Translator: What is meant by contrast indication is that when a person negates the existence of one thing that has an opposite, then it is understood that the opposite thing is to be applied. So in this case, it is understood that the opposite of having one eye is to have two eyes. So since, the Prophet ﷺ negated the possibility of God being one-eyed, the opponents of Ibn al-Jawzī understood from that that He must have two eyes. However, there is no decisive evidence in support of this. Not all scholars of legal theory and interpretation accept contrast indication as an authoritative proof.

[109] See the fiftieth ḥadīth for an extended discussion on this aspect of "one-eyed."

They are also mistaken when they read His Words, Exalted in Highness: [...] *to what I created with My [two] hands* (Qur'ān 38: 75).[110] The hand linguistically has the meaning of "a favor" and good treatment. The statement of the Jews: *God's hand is restrained* (Qur'ān 5: 64) may God, Exalted be He, distance His mercy from those [who said it], means, "Held back from spending." The hand (*yad*) is also "strength." The Arabs say, "He has a hand in this matter."

His saying: *Nay, His [two] hands are extended* (Qur'ān 5:64) means, "His favor" and "His power."[111] And His saying: [...] *to what I created with My hands* (Qur'ān 38:75) means, "With My power and My favour." Al-Hasan said, *God's hand is over their hands* (Qur'ān 48:10) means, "His graciousness and good treatment."

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[110] Zamakhsharī says, "Verily the possessor of [two] hands executes most of his duties with his hands. So the work done with the hands began to overshadow the other duties that are executed with other than them to the point that it was said about the work of the heart: 'It is from what your hands have done.' Also to the point that it was said to he who has no hands: 'Your hands poured and your mouth blew.' And to the point that there does not remain a difference between you saying, 'this is what you did' and 'this is what your hands did.'" Rāghib al-Asfahānī said in his *Mufradāt*, "His saying, Exalted in Highness: *from what Our hands have done* (Qur'ān 36: 71) and: *to what I created with My hands* (Qur'ān 38: 75) are His way of expressing that He assumes the responsibility of creating things through invention, which is solely His [doing], Mighty and Majestic. He made special mention of the 'hand' so that the meaning could take form, since it is the most splendid of limbs by which action is executed between us, therefore the special quality in the meaning would take form [in the mind], not so that we would imagine an equation [between God and His creatures]. It has been said that its meaning is: '[...] by My favor that I have prepared for them.' The [preposition] '.ب' [with] in it is not like the '.ب' [with] in their saying: 'I cut him with the knife.' Rather it is like their saying: 'He came out with his sword.' That means, 'his sword was with him.' Its meaning is: 'and with him are my worldly and heavenly favors that whenever he observes them, he reaches the greatest happiness through them.'" The Most Erudite Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī said in his exegesis, *Mahāsin al-Ta'wīl*, "*to what I created with My hands* means 'by Myself' without intervention through a father and mother."

[111] It says in *Asās al-Taqdīs* of the Renewer of the sixth century, al-Fakhr Rāzī, "And what produces the beauty of this metaphor is that the perfection of the state of this body part appears only with the attribute called 'power'. Since the aim of the hand is to achieve power, the name, 'power,' was applied to the hand, and because the instrument for granting a favor is the hand. In using the word 'hand' to mean 'favor' is a use of the cause to refer to the effect."

This is the statement of the scholars that have researched and examined matters with precision.

But, Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "The hands are two attributes of the essence called *al-yadāni.*" This [view] is [the result of] behaving according to sheer opinion without an evidence to establish its authenticity. He [Qādī Abū Ya'lā] further said, "If Adam, upon him be blessing and peace, did not have an advantage over the remainder of animals by being created by the hand, which is an attribute, He would not have extolled and dignified him by mentioning it. He said, *with My hands.* [Had] it meant "power," he would have no advantage, [and nor would the pronoun "My" in "My hands"] have been placed in the dual ["My two hands"]."

We could explain [the above conclusion] by saying that on the contrary, there is such a convention in the language. The Arabs used to say, "He does not have two hands in this affair" meaning that, "He has no power in it whatsoever." 'Urwa ibn Hizām said, "So, they said: 'May God cure you. By God, we do not have two hands in what the ribs have concealed.'" As for their saying, "With that (being created with God's hand) He distinguished Adam from the animals," God, Exalted be He, said: [in contention to their claims] *We created for them, from what Our hands have done, cattle* (Qur'ān 36: 71), and, it did not indicate the granting of distinction to cattle over the remainder of animals.[112]

God, Exalted be He, said: *And, the sky, We built it with hands* (Qur'ān 51: 47), which in this context means, "With strength." Then, God said He blew into Adam from His spirit. He did not mean an action that is to be taken literally from the language or that He formed Adam from His Own Being, By no means! The meaning [of the passage] is [no more than], "I blew." Here, the honor of the possessive form is enough, since it does not befit the Majesty of the Creator, Splendid is His Majesty, [to attribute or understand the passage on blowing the spirit] any other way than that [mentioned]. This is due to the fact that He is not in need of acting through a medium, nor is He in need of organs and limbs to take action or act by, since God, Exalted be He, is independent and not in need of the Creation by His essence.

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[112] Translator: In other words, stating that God created Adam with His hand is not a statement to distinguish Adam from other creatures, therefore, there is no evidence that God has a physical hand.

[When one understands this, then they will know that] it is not proper that He be preoccupied with seeking to glorify [and elevate the rank of] Adam, upon him be blessing and peace, while being heedless of what The Originator, Glory be He, is truly deserving of in terms of being exonerated above having parts, or implements in acting, for these things are the descriptions of [created and flawed] composite bodies.

[In addition to this], one of the three [scholars also] believes that God touches, even [making the presumption] that He touched the clay of Adam with a hand, which is part of His essence. They did not fully consider that amongst all His creations are composite bodies that face other composite bodies that unite with them and influence their nature. [And these created bodies are also able perform actions towards other creations or influence other things without the need to use other devices and means but rather touching that body directly.] Do you [men then honestly] think that God, Glorified and Exalted be He, who has made the acts of persons and composite bodies able to have an effect on other objects that are at a distance [from them without touching them] while He is somehow in need of [doing an act of creation] using [the medium of] clay?! [113] Whoever thinks in this contradictory way has already been refuted by His Statement, Exalted be He: *Verily, the parable of Jesus with God is like the parable of Adam. He created him from dust. Then, He said: Be! Then, it is* (Qur'ān 3: 59).[114]

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[113] Translator: The point that Ibn al-Jawzī is making is that God has created things that are able to exert influence on other things without touching them. A case in point is that of the squid, which is able to squirt its ink on an opponent and blind it, thus having an effect on it without touching it by way of its tentacles. Ibn al-Jawzī's point would then be, "Are we to assume that these creations are better than God (in this case, the squid) as they are able to influence things without touching, while God has to exert some part of his being to affect creation?" This would of course make God less than His Creation, for He would need means (in this case physical touching and

[They undoubtedly fall into error when looking at His words], Exalted be He: *And God warns you from His Self* (Qur'ān 3: 28) and: *You know what is in my self, and I do not know what is in Your Self* (Qur'ān 5:116). The commentators explain the first passage to mean, "And God warns you from Him," and they said [while noting the second passage], "You know what is with me, and I do not know what is with You." The scholars that have researched and examined matters with critical precision said, "The meaning of the "self" here is God's essence. For the self of a thing is its essence.[115] But, Qādī [Abu Ya'lā] held the view that God has a self, and that it is an attribute added to His essence. This is a statement that can only lead to likening God with His Creation, for the essence has been declared as one thing and the self has been made another in addition to it.

[They have stumbled in their understanding of His statement], Exalted be He: *There is not like His likeness a thing* (Qur'ān 42: 11).[116] The apparent meaning of the statement is that

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not through His Will/Decision) in order to affect things and His Power would be bounded and insufficient.

[114] Translator: This majestically demonstrates that indeed God is greater than the squid and every other creation, for He creates without need as mentioned in the verse and without having to result to means, such as hands, limbs and the like.

[115] Translator: So one should not assume that God has a soul or a physical body on the basis of this verse.

[116] Zamakhsharī says in *al-Kashshāf*, "They said: 'The like of you is not stingy,' so they negated stinginess from the like of him. And they mean to negate it from his person (ذاته), and they wanted to exaggerate in doing that. So they took the path of indirect expression in doing it, because if they negate it from those who are equal to Him and from those who share His most special characteristics, they have negated it from Him too. [In a similar vein] when you say to the Arab: 'The Arabs do not break covenants.' It would be more eloquent than saying: 'You don't break.' Another example of it is their saying: 'His lusts grew up and his contemporaries attained maturity.' They mean (to express) his attainment of adulthood and maturity."

He has a likeness, so there would be nothing like His likeness. However, this is not so. The meaning according to linguists is merely that the equal [of something] stands in the place of the thing itself. A person would say, "The like of me does not speak to the like of you." And, the meaning is merely, "There is nothing like Him."

[They have made mistakes in regards to His statement], Exalted be He: *The day that a shin will be laid bare* (Qur'ān 68: 42).[117] The majority of scholars say, "He will bring to light a grave and intense matter," and they would recite, "And the war stood up on a shin."[118] [That is, it intensified]. Another said, "And if the

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Rāghib said that, "the word 'ند' is used to refer to the one who shares an essential nature only. The word 'شبه' is used to refer to the one who has a similar state only. The word 'مساوي' is used to refer to something that is equal in sum only. The word 'شكل' is used to refer to what shares only in degree and area. The word 'مثل' encompasses all of that. Therefore, when God wanted to negate equality in every way, He made specific mention of it. He said, *There is not like His likeness* (مثله) *a thing*. As for joining between the 'ك' (like) and 'مثل' (likeness) – it has been said that – that is to add emphasis to the negation as a way of alerting that using the word 'مثل' (likeness) isn't proper, nor the 'ك' (like). So He negated both matters together by saying 'ليس' (there is not). And it has been said: 'the 'مثل' here means 'description' (صفة). And its meaning is: 'there is not like his description any description' (كصفته صفة ليس) as an alert to that – even though He is described by much of what mortals are described by–those attributes of His are not in accordance with how they are used with reference to mortals."

[117] And amongst what Rāzī said regarding the interpretation of the verse (Qur'ān 68: 42) is that it means, "The Day that the shin of Hell or the shin of the Throne or the shin of a huge awesome angel will be laid bare," while the phrase only indicates the existence of a shin. As for whose shin that is, there is nothing in the phrase that indicates it." In *Maḥāsin al-Ta'wīl* of the most erudite, Jamāl Qāsimī, may God show him mercy, [it is written that] Abū Sa'īd al-Darīr said: "It means: The day that the base of the affair will be laid bare," and the shin of a thing is its base by which its upright posture occurs like the shin of trees and the shin of man. That is, the true nature of things and their bases will appear on the Day of Resurrection. So the shin means 'the base of the affair and its true nature' as a metaphor for 'the shin of trees.'"

[118] Bayhaqī said in his book, *al-Asmā wa al-Sifāt*, while using these words of poetry as evidence, "[It has been related] about Ibn 'Abbās that he was asked about His saying, Exalted in Highness: *The day that a shin will be laid bare*. He said: 'When something from the Qur'ān is confusing to you, then look for it in poetry. For verily it is the *dīwān* of the Arabs.'"

war turns its garment up over its shin [...]." Ibn Qutayba said, "The origin of this is that when a man falls into a significant matter that requires the effort of seriousness in it, he rolls up [his garments] from his shin. Thereafter, the shin was used as a metaphor in place of adversity." This is also the view of Farrā, Abu 'Ubayda, Tha'lab, and all linguists.

[Imām's] Bukhāri and Muslim related in their two *Ṣaḥī ḥs* that the Prophet ﷺ said that, "God, Mighty and Majestic, will uncover His shin."[119] This is a possessive form ascribed to Him. Its meaning is, "He will uncover His adversity and His actions that are attributed to Him." And the meaning of, "He will uncover it" is "He will remove it." 'Āsim ibn Kulayb said, "I saw Sa'īd ibn Jubayr get angry and say, 'They say, He will uncover His shin, while that is merely from an adverse matter.'"

Abū 'Umar,[120] the Scrupulous, mentioned that, "The shin means the self." He [also] said, "And [an example] of it is the statement of 'Alī [ibn Abū Tālib], may God be pleased with him, when the *Shurāt* (the *Kharijites*) said, 'There is no judging except for God, Exalted is He.' 'Alī said, 'It is a must to wage war against them even if my shin perishes.'" So, according to this the meaning of it would be, "He will become manifest to them."

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[119] In *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, it is recorded that {isnad omitted by translator} the Prophet ﷺ said, "Our Lord will uncover His shin. Then every believing man and woman will prostrate to Him [...]' Hāfiz Ibn Hajar said, "It occurrs in this version [with the words]: 'Our Lord will uncover His shin.' It is the version of Sa'īd ibn Abī Hilāl from Zayd ibn Aslam. Ismā'īlī reported it with the same wording and said: "There is a point of objection in his statement: "His shin." Then he reported it by way of Hafs ibn Maysura ibn Yazīd ibn Aslam with the wording, "A shin will be exposed." Ismā'īlī said, "This [narration] is sounder, because of its agreement with the wording of the Qur'ān on the whole!'" Ibn Shāqlā criticized Bukhārī for reporting the ḥadīth of the shin in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, because it is from the narration of Ibn Abī Hilāl, who he is of the opinion that he does not fulfill Bukhārī's conditions. Due to his weakness. Ibn Ḥazm also said, "Ibn Abī Hilāl is not strong. Yahyā and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal mentioned that he confuses and mixes up ḥadīths."

[120] Translator: Swartz, in his translation, refers to this personality as 'Abu 'Amr' instead of 'Abu 'Umar.' He writes, "The reading of the name is uncertain. [...] If 'Abu 'Amr is the correct reading, it is undoubtedly a question of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Hamdan, the author of several works on the Qur'ān and Arabic grammar, who died in 378/988 However, in parallel passages [in other works] the name is given as Abu 'Umar az-Zahid, whose full name is Muḥammad b. 'Abd Al-Wahid b. Abi Hashim Abu 'Umar al-Baghwi az-Zahid. He was the author of a work on the ḥadīth and died in 345/956. See, Merlin Swartz, op. cit., p.151.

And in the ḥadīth of Abū Mūsā about the Prophet ﷺ where he said, "He will remove for them the veil and, they will look at God, Mighty and Majestic. Then, they will fall to God, prostrate, but some people will remain. In their backs will be the like of the spurs of cows. They will want to prostrate, but they will not be able to. So, that is [the intent of] His saying, Exalted is He: *The day that a shin will be laid bare, and they are called to prostrate. However, they will not be able* (Qur'ān 68: 42)."

Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] held the view that the shin is an attribute of the essence. He said, "Similar to it is, 'He will put His foot in Hell.'" He narrated about Ibn Mas'ūd that he said, "He will uncover His right shin. Then, the Earth will shine from the light of His shin."

I would say to this statement that his mention of the shin along with the foot is clearly drawing a likeness between God and His Creation. As for what he mentioned about Ibn Mas'ūd, this is impossible [to have come from him]. In addition to that, an attribute cannot be established for God with the like of these fairy tales, just as His essence cannot be described as "a beaming light" by which the Earth will shine. [Abū Ya'lā's] argument about the annexation [of the shin to God being an indication that it is an attribute of His] is of no significance, because if He uncovers His adversity [experienced on the Day of Judgment] He has uncovered His shin. So, it appeared to these [scholars] that the meaning of, "He will uncover" is "He will show," but the meaning can only be, "He will make [it] vanish and disappear" [since He will remove the horrors and advertisities experienced by the believers on the Day of Judgment].

But, Ibn Hāmid said, "It is compulsory to believe that God, Glorified and Exalted be He, has a shin, which is an attribute of

His essence. So, whoever rejects that has disbelieved." In replying, I would say that if an uncultured layman uttered this it would be repugnant. Then how [should one feel] when this is uttered by someone who is supposed to be from the people of knowledge? For surely, those who interpret are more justified and excused than they are, because they refer the matter back to the language, while these [scholars] whom we are discussing affirmed a shin and a foot for the Essence of God so that the ascription of a body and form became a reality.

[They have made an error in understanding His words], Exalted be He: *Then, He became established over the Throne* (Qur'ān 57: 4).[121] Khalīl ibn Aḥmad said, "The *'Arsh* is the 'throne,' and, every throne of a king is called an *'arsh.*" This was a common word used amongst the Arabs during the period before Islām and which has continually been used during the Islāmic period. God, Exalted be He, said: *And he raised his parents on the throne* (Qur'ān 12:100) as well as: *Which of you will bring me her throne?* (Qur'ān 27: 38)

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[121] Alūsi says in his exegesis, "People differ regarding the discussion of this verse and others like it. There are those who explain *al-'arsh* according to the popular meaning, 'Throne,' and explain *al-istiwā'* to mean 'establishment.' That has been related from Kalbi and Muqātil. Bayhaqi related it in *al-Asmā' wa al-Sifāt* with many different readings from a group of the *Salaf*, but he declared all of them to be weak. As for what is related about Mālik, may God be pleased with him, that when he was asked: "How did God mount the throne?" Imām Mālik lowered his head and was silent until the sweat of fever covered his brow, then he looked up and said: "*Istiwa'* is not unknown, the modality of it is inconceivable in the mind; but belief in it is obligatory, and inquiring about it is a heretical innovation. You are an innovator." And he gave orders for him to be taken out. This [here] is not unequivocable in indicating this view due to the possibility that what is meant by his saying, 'not unknown,' is that 'it is of well-known confirmation' not that its meaning is 'establishment.' And that it is not unknown." He said in another place, "And Shaykh 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām held the like of this view. He said in his *Fatāwā*: "The methodology of figurative interpretation goes with its condition. It is to bring the interpretation closer to the truth, since God, Exalted in Highness, merely addressed the Arabs according to what they already knew. And He erected the proofs indicating His intent from the verses of His book, since He said, Glory to Him: *Then verily its explanation is upon Us* (Qur'ān 75: 19) and: [...] *so that you'd make clear to the people what has been revealed to them* (Qur'ān 16: 44). This generally applies to all of the verses of the Qur'ān. So whoever becomes acquainted with the proof, God will grant him understanding of His intent from His book. And such a one is more perfect than he who has not become acquainted with that, since those who know and those who do not know are not equal." This is a position of moderation regarding the matter. Ibn Hamām took a stance of moderation in *al-Musāyara* (as one attaining the rank of *ijtihād* as his contemporary, Ibn 'Ābidīn al-Shāmī, says in *Radd al-Muktār*) more excellent than this moderate position. He mentioned the gist of what is, "The obligation of believing that God mounted

You should know that linguistically, "establishment" (*istiwā'*) has a number of meanings, one of them being "evenness." One of Banū Tamīm said, "*Fastawā* the wrongdoer of the tribe and the wronged." That is "They were even." *Al-istiwā* also means "The completion of something." God, Exalted in Highness, said: *And when it reached its full maturity and became complete [Wa istawā]* (Qur'ān 28:14). *Al-istiwā* can also mean, "To form an intention to do something." God, Exalted be He, said: *Then, He turned to the Heaven* (Qur'ān 2: 29). This statement means, "He formed an intention to create it." [Finally], 'al-istiwā' also means, "To gain mastery over something." [As] the poet said, "Whenever he attacks a people he declares their sacred precinct to be as public property/And by sunrise he has taken control of all they possess."

Ismā'īl ibn Abū Khālid al-Tā'ī related, "The throne is a red sapphire." All of the *Salaf* took the position of mentioning this verse as it has come without explanation (*tafsīr*) or interpretation (*ta'wīl*).

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the Throne while negating resemblance (between Him and His creation). As for the intent being 'He got mastery over [it],' it is possibly the intent, although it is not necessarily it, since there is no [decisive] proof for it. When it is feared that the laity will not understand what is meant by *al-istiwā*–when it does not mean *istīlā* (getting mastery over)–other than connectedness and other things that necessitate being a body, then there is no harm in directing their understanding to [accept the meaning] *al-istīlā* (getting mastery over something). For surely the reference to it linguistically has been confirmed [as] in the poet's saying: 'So when we rose up and got mastery over them–we made them a feeding ground for vultures and birds,' and the poet's saying: 'Bishr has gained mastery over Iraq–without a sword and without bloodshed.'

Some people of the latter days construed this description according to human understanding and perception. They said, "He became mounted on the throne with His essence." But this is an addition they have [which is] not reported from the *Salaf.* Rather, they understood it through their human perception, because the one who mounts something does so with his essence. Abū Hāmid said, "The mounting is physical contact and an attribute of His Essence. Its meaning is, 'To sit.'"[122] He said, "And a group of our comrades held the view that God, Exalted be He, is over His Throne. He does not fill it [its space] and He will sit His prophet with Him on the throne." He also said, "The descent is to change from one place to another."

According to what he has related, [it would follow that] God's essence would be smaller than the Throne. It is amazing then, when such a person, [after affirming this, then turns and says], "We are not of those who ascribe bodily characteristics to God!" It was said to Ibn Zāghūnī, "Has He acquired a new attribute that was not there after creating the throne?" He said, "No. He merely created the world with the attribute of 'underness.' So, the world became below in relation to Him. When the attribute of below is established for one of the two objects, being worthy of the attribute of above is established for the other." He also said, "And it has been established that places do not exist in His Essence, nor is His Essence in them. So, His disconnectedness from them is established. There must [also] be a starting point by which the partition occurs. So, when He said, *istawā,* we came to know His exclusive possession of that direction." He said, "And His essence must have an end and a limit that He knows."

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[122] Jalāl al-Dawānī said in *Sharh al-'Adudiyya*, "And I have seen in some of the works of Ibn Taymiyya the adoption of that opinion regarding the Throne (the categorical uncreatness of it). Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh said in one of his comments on the text, "And that was because Ibn Taymiyya was one of the Ḥanbalīs who clung to the literal meanings of the verses and ḥadīths who said that God became established on the Throne while sitting. So it was mentioned to him that it necessitates that the Throne is without beginning, since God is without beginning. So His place is without beginning, and the un-createdness of the Throne is contrary to his view (*madhhab*). So he said: 'Its type is uncreated,' meaning that God incessantly does away with one Throne and produces another from the infinite past to the infinite future so that His mounting continues without beginning or end." So let us ask: where would God be between the time of destroying [one Throne] and creating [another]? Does He cease to be established? If so, then let Him say that it is thus for infinity. So Glory to God! How ignorant is man and how repulsive is what he finds contentment with! I do not know if Ibn Taymiyya truly ever said any of that, since much has been reported about him that he did not say.

I would comment that this is a man who does not know what he is saying, because if God [had] determined a limit and partition between creation and Himself, He has delineated and affirmed that He possesses a shape or bodily form. [Ibn Zāġhūnī] also says in his book, "Surely, He is not an atom, because the atom is what occupies space." But [here] he establishes for Him a place that He occupies. This is indeed a foolish statement uttered by him and a clear likening of the Creator to the creation. So, this Shaykh did not know what is compulsory for the Creator, Exalted be He, and what is impossible in His regard. For verily, His existence, Exalted be He, is not like atoms and composite bodies that are in need of a location. Indeed the directions of under and over only apply to what can be faced and run parallel to something else. A necessity of the object being faced is for it to be bigger than, smaller or equal to the thing it is measured against. But this and the like only apply to composite bodies. Every thing that can be placed parallel to composite bodies can [also] touch them. Whatever is subject to [both] physical contact with composite bodies and to being apart from them is finite with an origin, since it has been established that the proof of the created and non-eternal nature of atoms is their susceptibility to physical contact and dislodgment. So if those in question considered this possible for Him, they have declared the possibility of His being non-eternal and created. And if they deny the possibility of that for Him, there no longer remains a way for us to establish the fact that atoms are indeed created.

If we then presume one who is independent of place and location and another that is in need of location, then we say, "Either they are neighboring or alongside one another or they are separate from one another." That would be impossible [with respect to the Creator] for verily, contiguity (the attribute of being so near as to be touching) and apartness are amongst the essential characteristics of occupying space with respect to all physical matter.[123]

It has also been established that joining and dispersing are amongst the essential characteristics of occupying space, and The One True God, Glorified and Exalted be He, is not to be described in terms of being in a space or time, since if He was subject to space, He would either be motionless in His location that bounded Him or moving away from it. It is also not proper to describe Him in terms of things such as motion, stagnation, joining, or dispersing. Whoever is alongside and touching or apart, has become defined by boundaries, and when ones existence becomes defined by a particular measure, one requires one who gives specification.[124] Conversely, it *should* be said that God is neither inside nor outside of the universe, because entering and exiting are among the inescapable properties of things that take up space. So these two states are just as [others, such as] motion, stagnation and all the other coincidental accidents and properties that happen to all physical objects.[125] [None of them apply to God].

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[123] Translator: The rulings that apply to physical matter cannot be applied to God.

[124] Translator: Ibn al-Jawzī is explaining that when you begin to speak of where something is or is not in terms of limits, space, time and boundary, you have already given it limits. However, Ibn al-Jawzī is very careful to qualify his statement so as not to be misconstrued. There is a difference between someone giving limits of space, time and boundary to God as mentioned above and giving *definition*, which could also be considered as a "boundary" to God, that He has given Himself in the revelation, such as Lord, God and Sustainer. In these matters God has defined Himself and given the limit or boundary between Himself and His Creation in that He does not resemble it, He does not need to eat, drink and so on. This type of "limiting" or "boundary," for lack of a better word, is allowed and necessary, for God has *defined* Himself in this manner, which is not the type of definition and limit being addressed in the text by the author.

With regard to the statement of those in question, "He created places, not in His essence. So, His being detached from places is clearly established," we would reply, "His Holy Essence is not susceptible to having something created in it, nor for anything to take up residence in it." [In spite of this], their taking a human understanding and perception of the texts has caused them to liken God with His Creation while mixing various things and themes. [They continued in this manner] until one of them said, "God made mention that He mounted the Throne merely because it is the closest of all things in existence to Him." But this is also foolishness, because "closeness" in terms of distance can only be imagined to apply to a composite body. So it is very difficult for us to accept that someone saying such statements is held to be a member of our *madhhab*!

Some of them also made an argument that God is above the Throne by His saying, Exalted in Highness: *To Him the good word ascends. And the righteous deed—He elevates it* (Qur'ān 35: 10) as well as His saying, Exalted be He: *And He is The Irresistible, over His servants* (Qur'ān 6:18). They declared that to be "a physical overness" and forgot that the physical overness applies either to a composite body or an atom, and that "being over" can [also] be applied to "Highness in status." It is said, "*So and so (fulān) is*

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[125] Translator: Ibn al-Jawzī is warning us to use speech carefully. Thus it is more befitting of us to say that God is above space and time or that God was before space and time, as is the statement of Imām ʿAli, may God be pleased with him. For if we spoke in an unqualified manner of God in using words such as inside, outside and attributing them to Him, this can create doubts or suspicious matters in the mind of the believer. It then behoves us to attempt to use unambiguous speech whenever possible.

over so and so (fulān)."[126] And, just as He, Exalted be He, said: [...] *over His servants,* He also said, Exalted in Highness: *He is with you.* (Qur'ān 57:4) So whoever [of these three men] understands this [passage] to mean "knowledge," his opponent may [rightfully] understand the establishment to mean *mastery and subdual.*[127]

One group held the view that God, Exalted be He, is on His Throne having filled its space. This position [according to them] more closely resembles Him touching the Throne while the Chair (*kursī*) is the place of His feet. I would answer this by saying, "Physical contact only occurs between two composite bodies." The one who would follow this position has not left anything [to the imagination] in likening God to a human body!

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[Sub-chapter]

If it is said, "It has been reported in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* from the ḥadīth of Shurayk ibn Abū Namir from Anas ibn Mālik, may God,

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[126] In Rāzī's *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* he says, "The world is a sphere. If this is so, it is then impossible for the god of the world to occur in the direction of 'up.' If we were to imagine two men, one of them on the point of the east and the other on the point of the west, the bottoms of their feet would be facing one another. Therefore, what is up with relation to one of them would be down with relation to the second. As for God, Exalted in Highness, to be below this ephemeral world is impossible by the agreement of [almost] everyone, so it is a must that He not be in a specific place."

[127] Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī says in *Asās al-Taqdīs*, "Verily the apparent meaning of His sayings, Exalted in Highness: *We are closer to him than the jugular vein* (Qur'ān 50: 16); *He is with you wherever you are* (Qur'ān 57: 04) and; *He is He who is, in Heaven, a God and, in Earth, a God* (Qur'ān 43: 84) negates His being established on the Throne. And there is no greater preference given to interpreting these verses over interpreting the verses whose literal meanings that they adopted."

Translator: In other words, one can not justifiably choose to interpret these verses and not interpret the others that point to God being in Heaven or over it, since there is no evidence stating that the above cited verses should be interpreted, while the verses the aforementioned Ḥanbalīs cling to should be accepted literally. Consequently, one must accept that either God is everywhere and in a particular place at one time, or that He is not restricted by place, since all of the verses would be taken as metaphors all indicating His transcendence.

Exalted in Highness be pleased with him, that he mentioned the Ascension (*al-Mi'raj*), and said concerning it, "He [the Prophet] ascended with him to al-Jabbār, Exalted in Highness. Then he ﷺ said while he was in His place: "O Lord! Make it easy on us." [The way to dismiss this as an evidence for their position is to quote what] Sulayman al-Khattābi said, "As for this wording, Shurayk was alone in [reporting] it. Others did not mention it, and he is many times alone in reporting rejected versions. Place cannot be attributed to God, Exalted be He. Rather the statement of the ḥadīth is a reference to the place of the Prophet ﷺ and the first place that he was made to stand. In the ḥadīth is [the statement], "[...] Then I asked permission from my Lord while He was in His abode." It gives the illusion of a place. However, the meaning is, "[...] in His abode whose homes are for His friends."[128] And Qāḍī [Abu Ya'lā] said in his book, *al-Mu'tamad*, "Surely, God is not characterised by place."

[Another example of verses where they liken God to His Creation is how they literally construe His Words], Exalted be He: *Are you secure from He who is in Heaven [...]?* (Qur'ān 67: 15-16)[129] It has been established unequivocally that the verse is not to be understood nor to be taken according to its literal meaning, because the word "in" is for containment, but The One True God, Glorified and Exalted be He, is not contained in any place. When human understanding prevents one from adopting the like of this [literal] understanding, all that is left for one to do is describe The Magnificent One with what is magnificent.

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[128] Bayhaqi added in *Kitāb al-Asmā wa al-Sifāt*, "And it is Paradise."

[129] Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī said about the explanation of this verse, "It is not possible for this verse to be left to flow according to its apparent meaning by the agreement of the Muslims, because His being in Heaven necessitates that Heaven encompasses Him from all sides. Therefore, God would have to be smaller than Heaven, and Heaven is much smaller than the Throne. In this case it would mean that God, Exalted in Highness, is a small thing in relation to the Throne. And that by the agreement of the people of Islam is impossible." Zamakhsharī said - and al-Fakhr concurred with him–concerning the verse: *He who is in Heaven* "It has two interpretations. One of them is: "He whose kingdom is in Heaven," because it is the habitat of the angels. And His Throne, His Seat, and the Preserved Tablet are there and from it, His judgments, books, commands, and prohibitions descend. The second [interpretation] is: "that they used to have anthropomorphic beliefs, that He was in Heaven, and that mercy and punishment descend from Him. And they used to call on Him from its direction (Heaven)." So it was said to them in accordance with their belief: "Are you secure from He whom you claim is in Heaven–while He transcends place–that He will not punish you by the Earth caving in or with a storm of pebbles?" This is similar to if you said to some of the Anthropomorphists: "Do you not fear that He who is on the

Another [passage taken by people to suggest literal human like qualities for God] is His Statement, Exalted be He: *O pity me over what I neglected in God's side [...]* (Qur'ān 39:56).[130] That is, "In His obedience and command," since negligence can only occur with respect to His Essence. As for the commonly acknowledged "side" of the possessor of limbs, no negligence can occur in its regard. But, Ibn Hāmid said, "We believe that God, Glorified and Exalted be He, has a side on the basis of this verse." The lack of reason in this regard is unbelievable! If negligence is not possible with respect to [the physical side of] creation, how could it be

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Throne will chastise you for what you do?" when you see him committing certain sins." Rāzi also said, "And the goal behind mentioning Heaven is to magnify God's authority and to extol His power as He said: *And He is God in the Heavens and on Earth* (Qur'ān 6: 3). For a surety an object cannot be in two different places at the same time." He also said, "Why is it not possible for the intent of His saying: *He who is in Heaven*, to be 'the angel given the assignment of carrying out the punishment' who is Gabriel, upon him be peace?"

[130] Zamakhsharī says in *al-Kashshāf*, "The [Arabic word *janb* translated as] 'side' is synonymous with [the Arabic word] *jānib*. It is said: 'I am at the side of Fulān and 'Fulān has a gentle side.' Eventually they said: 'He was negligent in his side.' They mean 'with respect to him.' Sābiq the Berber said: "Do you not fear God in a lover's side – who has a burning heart for you that is broken to pieces?" Sayyid Mahmūd Alūsī said in his exegesis, *Rūh al-Ma'ānī*, "And in general it is not possible to allow that expression to remain understood according to its literal sense, because of His being exalted, Mighty and Majestic, above having the 'side' that carries the literal meaning. I have not found any of the *Salaf* considering it to be amongst the reported ascriptions. I would not rely upon what is found in *al-Mawāqif*. But, presuming that it is considered [one of His attributes], their discussion of it is well known and all of them unanimously agree upon exonerating God from imperfection. So Glory belongs to the One whom nothing is like Him. He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing! And in the personal Qur'ān of Hafsa it reads: *In God's remembrance*. The Most Erudite Qāsimī said in his exegesis, says, "That is [it means], '[in what I neglected] at the side of His command and prohibition, since I did not follow the best of what was revealed.'"

possible regarding an Attribute of the Creator, Splendid is His Majesty? Thaʿlaba sung: "O my friends! Stop and remember God in my side!" That is, "in my regard."

And, [an example] of them is His saying, Exalted in Highness: *So, We blew into him from Our spirit* (Qur'ān 21:91).[131] The exegetes said, "It means: 'from Our mercy.'" The spirit is only attributed to Him, because it was from His command.

[Another of the verses that could be misinterpreted is] *They harm God* (Qur'ān 33:57).[132] That is, "They harm His Friends." This is the same as His Words, Exalted be He: *And, ask the village* (Qur'ān 12:82). That is, "Ask its inhabitants." And, he said, ﷺ "Uhud is a mountain. It loves us and we love it." And, the poet said: "I have been told that the Fire, justly, has been ignited/And, the assembly railed at one another upon your passing, O Kulayb!"

Another [passage commonly misunderstood is], *Do they but wait until God comes to them in the shadows of the clouds?* (Qur'ān 2:210)[133] That is, "With shadows." Also [misunderstood by many is the passage] *And, your Lord comes* (Qur'ān 89:22). But, Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] mentioned that Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal commented on this passage, saying that, "The meaning of it is: 'His power and command.'" Imām Aḥmad also said, "And God already clarified it in His saying, Exalted in Highness: [...] *the command of your Lord comes* (Qur'ān 2:210)." The same thing has been mentioned in

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[131] Shihāb al-Alūsī said: *And We blew into him from Our spirit* (Qur'ān 38: 72) is a depiction of the pouring out of what actually has life over the matter that is susceptible to it (life). So there is neither a blow nor anything blown. It means, "When I complete his preparation and have poured over him that apparent spirit by which it lives, which is [no more than] My command [...]."

[132] Alūsi said, concerning: *Verily those who harm God and His messenger* (Qur'ān 33: 57) that to "harm" [God and His messenger] is a reference to "the unbelief and abominations perpetrated that God and His Messenger are not pleased with" (expressed in this place) as a metaphor, since those things are a cause (for harm), or something necessitating it. And if that's [achieved] by looking at Him, Exalted in Highness, with relation to other than Him, Glory to Him, then it is sufficient in [establishing] the relationship. It has also been said about harming Him, Exalted in Highness, that: "Of the statements of the Jews, Christians, and Polytheists are: *God's hand is fettered*; *The Messiah is the son of God*; *The angels are the daughters of God*, and *The idols are His partners*. High is God above that in great Highness!"

[133] One thing that Jār Allāh Zamakhsharī said is, "It is possible for the thing brought to be a creation in which case it would mean 'God will bring them His punishment or His vengeance' since it is indicated in His saying: *For verily God is All-Mighty* (Qur'ān 2: 220). So if you said: "Why will the punishment come to them in clouds?" I would say: "because the clouds are the most likely object [of the descent] of mercy. When the punishment descends from it, the matter is more horrid and horrific, since when evil comes from where it is not expected, it is more distressing.

Likewise, when good comes from where it is not expected, it is more pleasing. So how about when evil comes from where good is expected?" For that reason, the thunderbolt is an example of the revolting chastisement because of its arrival from where abundant rain is expected. Hence, God's saying, Exalted in Highness: *And what they were not anticipating appeared to them from God* (Qur'ān 39:48) weighed heavy on those who ponder the Book of God." And, al-Fakhr al-Rāzi conveyed a large section–as is customary for him regarding the verses of the divine attributes–to the point that he said, "Verily His saying: *God will come to them* (Qur'ān 2: 210) and: *Your Lord comes* (Qur'ān 89: 22) is a notification of the state of the Resurrection. He mentioned this occurrence precisely in *Sūrah al-Naḥl*, where He said: *Do they but wait until the angels come to them or for the command of your Lord to come?* (Qur'ān 16: 33). So this clear text became a clarification for that ambiguous text, since when each of these verses came regarding a single incident, it is not a remote thing to construe some of them according to [the meaning of] others. And, He, Exalted in Highness, said after it *And the matter is settled* (Qur'ān 2: 210). There is no doubt that the definite article, 'the', (ال) are to indicate something familiar that has already been mentioned. So it must be that something was mentioned before that, and the definite article, 'the,' stands as an allusion to it. That thing is no more than what we have declared to be hidden in His saying: *God will come to them* (Qur'ān 2: 210) meaning 'the command of God will come.'" Al-Fakhr Rāzi ended the comment with his statement, "And what is clearer to me of all that has passed is that we mentioned that His saying, Exalted in Highness: *O you who believe! Enter into peace entirely* (Qur'ān 2: 208) descended in reference to the Jews. And according to this estimation, His saying: *So if you slip after the clear evidences have come to you, then know that God is All-Mighty, All-Wise* (Qur'ān 2: 209) would be an address directed to the Jews. Therefore, in this instance, His saying, Exalted in Highness: *Do they not but wait until God comes to them in canopies of clouds and the angels?* (Qur'ān 2: 210) would be a narrative about the Jews, the meaning being 'they will not accept your religion unless God comes to them in canopies of clouds with the angels.' Do you not see that they did something similar with Moses? They said: *We will not believe you until we see God manifestly* (Qur'ān 2: 55). Since this is a narrative about the state of the Jews, it would be allowed to let it run according to its apparent meaning, because they adopted the creed of anthropomorphism. They considered it possible for God to come and go, saying: 'Verily He, Exalted in Highness, became manifest to Moses, upon him be peace, on the mount in canopies of clouds.' They also asked the like of that during the time of Muḥammad ﷺ."

the Torah. *And, your Lord comes.* Imām Aḥmad said, "It is merely His power."

Ibn Hāmid said, "This is an error. Rather, He descends with His Essence by changing location." I would answer this by saying that this statement of his about God's Essence, Exalted be He, is based on human understanding and perception when considering physical entities and the like. Imām Ibn 'Aqīl when commenting upon His saying, Exalted be He: *Say: the spirit is from the command of my Lord* (Qur'ān 17:85), said, "He who curbs His creation from asking about a created thing, then curbing them from [asking about] the Creator and His attributes is more fitting." And, they used to sing: "The description of the soul, man cannot grasp it/So, how about the description of the All-Powerful in beginninglessness?"

CHAPTER 2
MAKING MENTION OF THE ḤADĪTHS THAT THEY CLASSIFIED "REPORTS OF ATTRIBUTES"

You should know that such ḥadīths contain subtleties and defects that none know except the juridical scholars. [These sometime] occur in their narration and othertimes in disclosing their meanings, and, we will clarify that, God-willing.

The First Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that Abū Hurayra, may God be pleased with him, said, "The Messenger of God ﷺ said: 'God, Exalted be He, created Adam, upon him be blessing and peace, on his form.'"[134]

Scholars have two different positions about this matter. The first is, "To maintain silence about its explanation," and the second is to, "Discuss its meaning." The proponents of the second view differ over the pronoun "his"— regarding who it refers to—into three possible opinions:

[The first possibility is that] it refers to one of the children of Adam. That is because the Prophet ﷺ passed by a man hitting another man while saying to him, "May God disfigure your face and the face of whoever resembles your face." So, he said ﷺ "When one of you strikes, let him be wary of the face. For surely, God, Exalted in Highness, created Adam on his form."

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[134] Rāghib al-Asfahānī says, "As for the form, what he means by it is the 'shape' that perceives through sight and spiritual discernment that He gave exclusively to man. His superiority to many of His creatures is due to it. Its annexation to God, Glory to Him, is a figurative way of indicating possession, not to indicate the division into parts or equality. He is high above that! Rather that is a way of indicating that he has been granted nobility as in His saying: 'the house of God' and 'the she-camel of God.' And similar to that is [His saying]: *And I blew into him from My spirit* (Qur'ān 38: 72)."

He made special mention of Adam because he is the one whose facial features were started on this form and was afterwards copied. So, it is as if he was alerting to the fact that, "You have reviled Adam even though you are one of his children." And that is an exaggerated way of rebuking him. Based on this understanding, the "his" is an indirect expression pointing to the person being hit.[135] [It would be] a gross error [if it was used] to refer to God, Mighty and Majestic, because of the Prophet's ﷺ saying: "[...] and the face of whoever resembles your face." For certainly if he attributed it to God, Glory to Him, it would clearly be likening God to His Creation. In the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayra, may God, Exalted be He, be pleased with him, as narrated by Muslim, the Prophet ﷺ said that "When one of you fights let him avoid the face. For verily, God, Exalted be He, created Adam on his form."

The second opinion is that the [pronoun] "his" is an indirect expression referring to two clear nouns. So it does not fit to be directed to God, Mighty and Majestic, due to the establishment of proof that He, Exalted be He, is not a form. Thus the pronoun in the text refers to Adam. The meaning of this ḥadīth is that God, Exalted in Highness, created Adam completely on his form upon which He created him, and He did not transform him from a sperm to a clot as in the case of his progeny.[136] This is the view of Abū Sulaymān al-Khattābī. And, Tha'lab mentioned it in his *Amāli*.

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[135] One of the things that Rāzi mentioned about the explanation of this report is, "Verily the aim of it is to invalidate the view of those who say that Adam was in another [physical] form like it is said that he had a huge body and a tall frame in such a manner that his head was close to Heaven. So the Prophet ﷺ pointed to a specific man - and he was the one being hit - and then said: "Verily God created Adam on his form." That is, Adam's physical shape was like the shape of this man with absolutely no dissimilarity."

[136] Amongst the interpretations that al-Fakhr presented in this place is his saying, "When He, Exalted be He, magnified the regard for Adam by making him the object

The third opinion is that it refers to God, Exalted be He, but there are two different views regarding thise meaning. The first of them is that it is the form of an angel, since it is God's doing and creation. So its ascription to Him is viewed in two ways, the first of them is [that it means], "To bestow honor through the use of a possessive pronoun," as in His saying, Exalted in Highness: *And, purify My house for the those who go around [it]* (Qur'ān 2:125). The second position stated is that, "He invented it, meaning the form of Adam, not according to any model that came before." The second view is that "form" means "characteristic." You say [in Arabic], "This is the form of this matter," meaning "its characteristic." [It follows therefore, that] the creation of Adam would be according to His characteristic, vis-à-vis life, knowledge, power, hearing, seeing, and will, and by that, He distinguished Adam from all other animals. He then distinguished him from the angels with the attribute of elevation when He made them prostate to him. But the form in this case is non-perceptible, not the form characterized by lines.

Abū Muḥammad ibn Qutayba[137] held a repugnant view about this ḥadīth. He said, "God, Exalted be He, has a form, not like [other] forms. Then He created Adam on it." This makes no sense and is nonsense, because the meaning of his statement is that

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of the angels' prostration and after he committed that error, God, Exalted be He, did not punish him in the same manner that He punished others. For it has been related that God, Exalted be He, cast him out of Paradise just as He cast out the serpent and the peacock while changing their physical form. But He did not change Adam's physical form. Rather, he left him in the original form to dignify him and as a way to preserve him from the chastisement of transformation."

[137] Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn Qutayba is the author of many works, one of the Imāms of literature, a transmitter of historical reports but who reports very little. He would sometimes relate anthropomorphic statements from the writings of the People of the Book. He is accused of *al-Nasb* (championing Mu'āwiya and reviling 'Alī). Hākim considered him to be a liar and others declared him to be trustworthy. He died in the year 276.

Adam's form is like the form of The One True God, Exalted be He. But, Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "Applying the statement, 'the form, not like forms,' is used to refer to The One True God, Exalted be He, just as we applied the name, 'his essence.'" This [equally] makes no sense, because the "essence" means "a thing," but "form" is a shape, [having] lines, and a composition. It requires a fashioner and composer. And the [last part of the] statement of the one who says, "A form not like other forms," is an invalidation of the first part of the proposition. He has become similar to [the one] who says, "He is a body, not like other bodies." For certainly the "body" is a physical thing and something composite. So when someone says, "A body unlike other bodies," he invalidates what he previously said.

The Second Ḥadīth

'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Ayyāsh related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form. He said to me: 'What is the Highest Assembly disputing about, O Muḥammad?' I said: 'You are more knowing, O Lord.' So, He placed His palm between my shoulder blades, and I felt its coldness between my breasts. Then, I knew all that is in the Heavens and Earth.'"

Imām Aḥmad said, "The source of this ḥadīth and its chains of narration are conflicting. It was related from the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayra, who reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "A visitor came to me in the most beautiful form, and said: 'What is the Highest Assembly disputing about?' I said: 'I don't know.' So he placed his palm between my shoulder blades, and I felt its coldness between my breasts. Then I knew everything that He asked me about." It is also related from the ḥadīth of Thawbān, who related that, "The Messenger of God ﷺ came out to us after the dawn prayer and said, 'Verily, my Lord came to me last night in the most beautiful form. Then He said to me, 'O Muḥammad!

What is the Highest Assembly disputing about?' I said: 'I don't know, Lord.' Then He placed His palm between my shoulder blades until I felt the coldness of His fingertips. Then, all between Heaven and Earth became manifest to me.'"

These ḥadīths are divergent. The best of their chains of narration indicate that this happened during sleep, but the vision seen in a dream is only a presumption. Presumptions are not realities,[138] just as a man may see himself flying or as if he has transformed into a beast, and different people have seen The One True God, Glory to Him, in their dreams in the way that we have mentioned. If we said that the Messenger of God ﷺ saw God while being awake, then the "form"—if we accept that [interpretation]—refers to God, Exalted in Highness. So the meaning would be, "I saw God in the best of His characteristics [like His] turning toward me and [His] display of satisfaction with me." And if we said that it refers to the Messenger of God ﷺ the meaning would be, "I saw God while I was in the most beautiful form." [139] But, Ibn Hāmid related from the ḥadīth of Ibn 'Abbās, God be pleased with them, from the Prophet ﷺ that he said, "When I was taken on the Night Journey I saw the All-Merciful

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[138] Hāfiz ibn Hajar says on this topic, "And there is no consideration given to he who followed up his comments with his saying: 'In the sound ḥadīth it says that 'the dream of Prophets is [divine] inspiration.'" So it does not require an interpretation, because it is the statement of one who has not given close scrutiny in this place. In *Kitāb al-Ta'bīr* it has passed that some dreams of Prophets are subject to interpretation."

[139] It remains a duty of the author to comment on the end of the ḥadīth. We will convey from al-Fakhr Rāzī's *Asās al-Taqdīs* what remains to complete the objective. [He says] As for his statement "He placed His hand between my shoulder blades," it has two [possibly valid] interpretations: The first is that the intent is to over emphasize the interest shown to his condition and the care for his state. The second [possible interpretation] is that the meaning of the 'hand' is [the bestowal of] 'favor.' As for his statement, "So I felt its coolness," there is a possibility that it means "the coolness of the favor," "its refreshing feeling," and "its comfort." It is an example of their saying: "a cool livelihood," when it is opulent. And what indicates that the meaning of it is [to imply] "complete acquaintance [with things]" is his saying, God bless and grant him peace, at the end of the ḥadīth: "Then I knew all between the East and the West."

One, Exalted in Highness, in the form of a beardless young man with light that glitters. And it appeared to [...][140] describing Him to you. So, I asked my Lord to honor me with seeing Him. Then, all of sudden it was as if He was a bride when His Veil was removed from Him, mounted on His Throne."

This ḥadīth is a shameful lie. It has not been reported in a sound or in a spurious collection. So may God, Exalted be He, be far from its doing! And we [Arabs] used to say [when the Qur'ān was being revealed] that that [Night Journey] was [merely] a dream. So would he ﷺ then mention this the night of the Isrā?! May God, Mighty and Majestic, repay them and reward them with Hell! They equate God, Glorified and Exalted be He, to a bride?! No Muslim has written this! And as for the mention of "coldness" in the preceding ḥadīth, coldness is a coincidental accident. It is not possible to be attributed to God, Mighty and Majestic. Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] mentioned in his book, *al-Kināya*, "I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form" That is, in the most beautiful place.

The Third Ḥadīth

Umm Tufayl, the wife of 'Ubayy, related that she heard the Messenger of God ﷺ mention that, "He saw his Lord, Mighty and Majestic, in a dream in the most beautiful form as a glowing young man in green. On his feet were sandals of gold, and over his face was a blanket of gold."

This ḥadīth, is related by Na'īm ibn Hamād. Ibn 'Adī said, "He used to fabricate ḥadīths." Imām Aḥmad was asked [about him], and he turned his face away from him (the asker). He said, "His ḥadīth is rejected and unknown." It is on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās from the Prophet ﷺ that he said, "I saw my Lord as a curly-haired beardless boy wearing a green vestment." This is related by way of Hamād ibn Salama, and Ibn Abū al-'Awjā, the crypto-infidel, [who] was the stepson of Hamād. He used to interpolate these ḥadīths in his [stepfather's] books that have neither been confirmed nor are they good for being used to make an argument.

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[140] It is likewise in the original kept in our possession. Translator: In the Swartz translation of *Akhbār al-Sifāt*, the missing phrase is: "Indeed, I was instructed not to describe Him to you." See Merlin Swartz, op. cit., p.180

Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] actually affirmed these [ascriptions of curly hair, being beardless, and having a green vestment] as attributes for God, Exalted be He. He said, "They have been established as names, but we don't comprehend their meanings." Who [on Earth] establishes [attributes] through dreams while the transmissions of them are not soundly established? We know the meaning of the *shābb* (young man) and the *amrad* (beardless young boy), but he says, "It is not as we understand." This is like someone saying, "*Fulān* stood up, but he is not standing," or, "He sat down, but he isn't sitting."

Imām Ibn 'Aqīl said, "We are certain this ḥadīth is a lie. The reliability of the narrators avails naught when the text is impossible to affirm." This is similar to the example if a group of trustworthy narrators informed us that the camel of the cloth merchant has entered the eye of the tailor's needle. The trustworthy status of the narrators has no affect while their report is actually impossible to affirm.

The Fourth Ḥadīth

Anas related that, "The Messenger of God ﷺ said, 'The night that I was taken on a journey (*al-Isrā*) I saw everything from my Lord until I saw a crown immersed in pearls.'"

Abū Qāsim Muḥammad ibn al-Yasa' relates it from Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm. Azhari said, "I used to sit with Ibn al-Yasa' for an hour, and then he would say: 'I have recited the entire Qur'ān since you sat down. And Qāsim [ibn Ibrāhīm] is insignificant." Imām ad-Dāraqutni said, "He [Abū Qāsim Muḥammad ibn Al-Yasa'] is a liar. May God, Exalted be He, recompense him for this deed."

The Fifth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* from Abū Hurayra, who narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "God will gather humanity, and then say, 'Whoever used to worship something, let him follow it.' Then, they will follow what they used to worship, and this *Umma* (nation) with its hypocrites will remain. Then God, Exalted be He, will come to them in other than the form by which they know Him and He will say, 'I am your Lord.' They will say, 'We take refuge with God, Exalted be He, from you. We will remain in our places until our Lord comes to us. And when our Lord has come, we will recognize Him.' Then He will come to them in the form that they know, and He will say, 'I am your Lord.' Then they will say, 'You are our Lord.'"

And in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* it is related from Abū Sa'īd that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Then The Omnipotent One will come to them in a form other than His form upon which they saw Him the first time and then He will say, 'I am your Lord.' They will say, 'You are our Lord.' Then only the Prophets, upon them be blessing and peace, will address Him. It will then be said, 'Is there between you and Him a sign that you know?' They will say, 'The shin.' Then He will expose His shin, and every believer will fall prostrate to Him."[141]

You should know that it is compulsory for every Muslim to believe with respect to God, Glorified and Exalted be He, that it is impossible that the "form" which happens to be a shape and a composition applies to God. Abū Sulaymān al-Khattābi said, "The meaning of 'then God, Exalted in Highness, will come to them' is that 'He will remove the veil for them until they see Him with their eyes, just as they used to identify Him in the world through empirical indications.' So seeing Him after they had not seen Him is analogous with the arrival of the visitor who has not been seen before."

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[141] The discussion of this ḥadīth has already passed during the explanation of His saying, Exalted in Highness: *The Day that a shin will be laid bare* (Qur'ān 68: 42).

Some scholars have said, "He will come to them with the horrors of the Resurrection and the forms of the angels."[142] But, they were not familiar with the like of such [a scene] in the world, so they will seek refuge from that condition and they will say, "When our Lord comes we will recognize Him." That is, "When He comes to us we will know Him from His kindness." And it is the "form" that they recognize. Then He will uncover a shin, meaning an adversity. It is as if He will remove those horrible adversities. So they will fall prostrate out of gratitude.

One of them said, "It is a form by which He will test them, just as He will dispatch the Anti-Christ (*Dajjāl*). Then, they will say, 'We take refuge with God, Exalted in Highness, from you.'" Also, in the ḥadīth related by Abū Mūsā, in which the Prophet ﷺ said, "The people will say: 'Verily, we have a Lord that we used to worship in the [mundane] world.' Then, it will be said, 'And would you know Him if you saw Him.' They will say, 'Yes.' Then it will be said, 'How could you know him and you have not seen Him?' They will say, 'Surely, there is none that resemble Him.' Then He will remove the veil, and they will gaze at God, Mighty and Majestic. Then they will fall prostrate.'" Imām Ibn 'Aqīl said, "The 'form' literarlly applies to lines and shapes. But those are some of the characteristics of physical entities. And what diverted us from [determining] Him to be a physical entity or body is His saying, Exalted be He: *There is nothing like unto Him* (Qur'ān 42: 11). Even a rational proof that could be utilised [to support the aforementioned conclusion] is that if God is a composite body, His [supposed] Form would be a contingent property [indicative of createdness]. And if God is a bearer of accidents, what is possible for physical bodies would be possible in His regard. [It would then follow that] God would need a maker, and if He were a composite body without beginning, it would also be possible for us to be without beginning [since we would be equal to Him, and there is no differnce between one possible equal and another].

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[142] [This should be read] while considering 'in' [which appears in the verse] to mean 'with.' Similar to it is the statement of Ibn 'Abbās who said about His saying, Exalted be He: *Do they but wait until God comes to them in canopies of clouds* [...] (Qur'ān 16: 33) that, "This means *with* canopies of clouds; according to what al-Fakhr Rāzi reported in his book, *Asās al-Taqdīs*.

So the evidence compels us to assign a meaning to "form" whose possessive form applying to God would be befitting Him and proper. And that is to demand that it means the "state" upon which [Arabic] linguists used sometimes synonymously with "form." They say, "What is your form ("state") like with *fulān*?" as well as, "*Fulān* is on a form ("state") of poverty."

So, the state that they disavowed knowledge of is [the state of] inconsistency, while the one that they acknowledged was [the state of] kindness. Therefore, He will *remove* adversity, since change is something that only befits His action. As for His Essence, it is exonerated from change.[143] We take refuge with God from having the ḥadīth taken according to the understanding of those that ascribe bodily characteristics to God, and [their understanding] that the "form" (*sūra*) refers His being. That is to deem it possible for change to befall His attributes. In spite of that, they referred to Him as being a "form." If that is meant literally, then it is an impossibility, and, if it is something [they] will imagine, then it is undoubtedly not as they would believe. He will show them something other than Himself.

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[143] Translator: Change does befit God's action, but it does not befit His essence, since according to the orthodox school of the Ash'aris, God's actions are created, while His essence is not. His action is something that occurs outside of His essence, and were we to say that it is not created, it would mean that the creation is eternal without beginning, since His creation is an act of His

The Sixth Ḥadīth

Muslim related in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* that al-Mughīra reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "There is no person more jealous than God. For that reason, He forbade vile deeds. And, there is no person who loves praise more than God."

Some narrators mention the word "person" (*shakhs*) and some mention, "There is nothing more jealous than God." The transmitters narrate according to what they believe the meaning to be. [The mention of the word] person, results from the corruption of the transmitters. The meaning could be, "There is not from you—O people—anyone more jealous than God." That is because once everyone was mentioned altogether He was denoted by their particular names. The person can only be a composite body. Another statement with similar form is that of Ibn Mas'ūd, "There has not been created from Heaven or Hell anything greater than the "Verse of the Chair" (*Āyat al-Kursī*).

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said, "The created refers to Heaven and Hell, not to the Qur'ān." It is also possible for this to be a result of the grammatical rule which determines that an entity mentioned in a group of things may be excluded when it is unrelated to the members of that category, like in His saying, Exalted be He: *They have no knowledge of it except the pursuit of conjecture* (Qur'ān 4:157). [144] As for "jealousy," the scholars have said, "Anyone who has displayed jealousy towards a thing has attributed his dislike to it." So, when God forbade vile deeds and threatened [to punish] for [committing] them, the Messenger of God ﷺ characterised Him as having jealousy.

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[144] Translator: Meaning that *conjecture* does not fall in the category of *knowledge*, even though the impression is given that it does. Its exclusion from the whole should not be understood that it falls under knowledge. Another example of this is God's saying: *So the angels fell prostrate, all of them, altogether, except for the Devil* (Qur'ān 38: 73-74). The impression one gets is that the Devil is one of the angels, but the truth is that he is not. It is common in Arabic usage to express an item to belong to a group of things and then for it to be actually excluded from it while indicating that it does not belong with the category of the other entities. For example, the Arabs used to say, "All the men stood up except for a donkey."

The Seventh Ḥadīth

Abū Mūsā related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, God, Exalted be He, created Adam from a handful that He grabbed from the entire Earth."[145]

The handful was attributed [to God] because the actions of the thing possessed can be attributed to the owner. That is because Adam was produced from a heap of sand as in His saying, Exalted be He: *So, we obliterated their eyes* (Qur'ān 54:37). Muḥammad ibn Sa'd related in *Kitāb al-Tabaqāt* ("The Compendium of Scholars") that God, Exalted be He, created the Devil and then took [mud] from the surface of the Earth, and created Adam from it. For that reason, the Devil said: *Shall I prostrate to him who You created from clay?* (Qur'ān 17:61)

The Eighth Ḥadīth

Salmān related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, when God leavened Adam's clay [from which he was created] and struck him with His hands every good [soul] came out in His right hand and every foul [soul] came out in His other hand. Then, He shuffled them. Thereafter, He brings the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living."

This is incompletely transmitted (*mursal)*. It has been also established with proof that The One True God, Glorified and Exalted be He, is not described as touching anything. If it were sound (*Ṣaḥīḥ)*, it would be taken merely as a similitude to refer to that by which destinies run. Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "The leavening of the clay and mixing some of it with others is annexed to the hand by which God created Adam." [But it should be known that] this is a clear equation between the Creator and His creation!

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[145] Suyūtī says in *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr*, "Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, Aḥmad, and Hākim reported it as well as Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan*, Tabarānī in *al-Kabīr*, and Ibn Sa'd."

The Ninth Ḥadīth

'Ubayd ibn Hunayn related, "While I was sitting in the mosque, Qatāda ibn al-Nu'mān suddenly came in, sat down, and began to speak. He said: 'Go with us to visit Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, for I have been informed that he has fallen ill.' So we went until we entered upon Abū Sa'īd and found him lying down while resting his right foot on the left. We greeted him and sat. Qatāda then raised his hand to the foot of Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī and pinched it extremely hard. [In doing so] Abū Sa'īd said: 'Glory to God, O son of Adam who has caused me pain!' Qatāda said: 'I meant [to do] that, since the Messenger of God ﷺ said, 'Verily, God, Exalted be He, when He completed His creation, He lied down, and then put one of His feet on the other.' He then said: 'It is not proper for one of His creation to do this.' Abū Sa'īd said, 'I will surely not do this ever again.'"[146]

'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥanbal said, "I have not seen this ḥadīth in the relied upon source books of the sacred law." Concerning 'Ubayd ibn Hunayn, Bukhāri said of him, "His ḥadīths on the authority of the People of Medina are not sound." In the ḥadīth is another weakness [namely] that Qatāda ibn al-Nu'mān died during the caliphate of 'Umar, God, Exalted in Highness, be pleased with him, and ʿUbayd ibn Hunayn died in the year 105 at the age of 75 according to the statement of Wāqidi. So his narration from Qatāda ibn Al-Nuʿmān would have a broken chain. Imām Aḥmad said, "If its chain of narration was sound it would be possible that the Messenger of God ﷺ related it from some of the People of the Book in a manner of condemning them [since it portrays the Creator as a human being who lies down and crosses his legs], but Qatāda did not understand the he was condemning [them]."

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[146] Ḥāfiz Bayhaqī related this report in *al-Asmā wa al-Sifāt* and said, "This is a rejected ḥadīth. I have only recorded it from this chain of narration. Falīh ibn Sulayman–one of the narrators–despite fulfilling the condition of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, we find that they did not report this ḥadīth of his in their *Ṣaḥī ḥs*. He is in the view of ḥadīth scholars, one who is not used to support an argument. [Concerning him,] it has been reported that Yahyā ibn Ma'īn said, "His ḥadīths are not used as proof," as well as saying, "Falīh is weak." It has also been reported that Nasā'ī said, "Falīh is not strong." The Shaykh [al-Bayhaqi] said, "So since Falīh ibn Sulaymān al-Madanī is one that ḥadīth scholars differ about the permissibility of using him as proof, the like of this grave matter cannot be established by his narration."" He also mentioned as a weakness the fact that 'Ubayd did not meet with Qatāda.

Similar to this is the ḥadīth in which we are told that al-Zubayr heard a man relating a ḥadīth about the Messenger of God ﷺ. He listened until the man finished and asked, "You heard this from the Messenger of God ﷺ?" The man said, "Yes." He said, "This and the likes of it are of what we have been prohibited from relating about the Prophet ﷺ. By my life, I [too] have heard this from the Messenger of God ﷺ on that day. However, the Messenger of God ﷺ started with this ḥadīth, and he related it to us concerning a man from the People of the Book. He related it and then you came after the conclusion of the first part of the ḥadīth. He also mentioned the man from the People of the Book, but you thought that it was a ḥadīth on the authority of the Messenger of God ﷺ."

I would then say that this statement is most likely the allusion in the ḥadīth of al-Zubayr to the ḥadīth of Qatāda.' Indeed the People of the Book said, "Verily, God, Exalted be He, when He created the Heavens and the Earth, rested." So His Words were revealed, Exalted be He: *And no fatigue touched us* (Qur'ān 50:38). It is possible that the Messenger of God ﷺ narrated that about them, and Qatāda did not hear the first part of the speech.

ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Aḥmad related in *Kitāb al-Sunna*, saying, "I saw al-Hasan placing his right foot on top of his left while sitting. So I said: 'O Abū Saʿīd! This sitting posture is disapproved of.' He said: 'May God distance from His mercy the Jews [who said: God rested on the seventh day]!' Then he read: *And We have created the Heavens, the Earth, and all between them in six days, and no fatigue touched us* (Qur'ān 50: 38). Then I knew what he meant by it. So I desisted."

I say that al-Hasan was alluding to what we mentioned about the Jews. It has been soundly established about the Messenger of God ﷺ Abū Bakr, and 'Umar, may God be pleased with them, that [the Jews] used to recline while placing one foot on another foot, while that is only disliked for the one who is not wearing trousers. And God knows best.

The Tenth Ḥadīth

Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] related about Hassān ibn 'Atiyya that a man from [among] the polytheists reviled the Messenger of God ﷺ so a man from the Muslims assaulted and then killed him. Thereafter, the [Muslim] man was killed in retribution. So the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Why are you astonished at he who supported God, Exalted be He, and His messenger? He met God, Exalted be He, while reclining and then He sat up for him."

This is a ḥadīth of one of the disciple's of the Prophet's companions (*tābi'īn*) far from being sound. If it had any strength its meaning would be, "Then God, Exalted in Highness, turned to him and blessed him."

The Eleventh Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥī ḥs* that Anas related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Hell will continue to [have souls] cast into it and it will say, 'Are there more?' until the Lord of Might puts His foot in it. Then part of it will become folded to the rest of it."[147]

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[147] Jār Allāh Zamakhsharī says in his book, *al-Fā'iq fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, "Putting the foot on something is a similitude indicative of inhibition and suppression. So it is as if he said: 'The command of God will come to it. Then it (the foot) will prevent

In considering this ḥadīth, it is our duty to believe that God's Essence, Mighty and Majestic, does not divide into parts, place cannot contain it, and it cannot be characterised by change and going from one place to another. Abū 'Ubayd al-Harawī related that Hasan al-Basrī said, "*Al-qadam* (literally the foot) is a reference to those from the worst of God's creatures whom have been earmarked and designated for Hell." Abū Mansūr al-Azharī said, "*Al-Qadam* are those who have been preordained to reside everlastingly in the Fire. And things that have been placed out in front are refered to in Arabic as *qadam*, while things that have been demolished are called *hadam*." And his ﷺ saying, "As for The Garden, He will erect for it a creation" supports this.

A second interpretation is that all of those who will arrive at Hell is called a *qadam*. In this case, qadam is the plural of *qādim*. As for those who relate the ḥadīth with the word "foot/leg," the Arab say [about locusts], "a foot or leg of locusts." So the intent would be "a party will enter Hell resembling, in their abundance, locusts. Then they will fall quickly into it." Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "The foot is an essential attribute of the [Divine] essence." Ibn Zāghūnī said, "It can be said that, He put his foot in the Fire only to inform them that their idols burn. It was as if He was saying, "Your idols burn and I do not burn." But this is an acknowledgment of division for God's essence into parts. It is amongst the most deplorable of beliefs.

And I found that Abū Bakr ibn Khuzayma composed a book about the attributes,[148] and divided it into chapters. Some of his chapters read: "The Chapter of the Affirmation of the Hand," "The Chapter of Holding the Heavens on His fingers,"

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it (Hell) from seeking the addition, so it will be inhibited.' He also says in *Asās al-Balāgha*, "An example of figurative speech is: 'Then He will put His foot over it.' That is, He will give it calm and break its vehemence, just as when a man places his foot on something that is palpitating to give it calm and stillness."

[148] It is the book that he called *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* (The Book of Monotheism). Imām Fakhr al-Din Rāzī says about it, "It is in reality *Kitab al-Shirk* (The Book of Polythiesm)."

and "The Chapter of the Affirmation of the Foot in spite of The Mu'tazilites." Then he said, "God, Exalted be He, said: *Do they have feet by which they walk? Or do they have hands by which they strike?* (Qur'ān 7:195) So He has told us that whoever does not have a hand or foot is like the cattle."

Imām Ibn 'Aqīl said, "God is indeed exalted from having an attribute that occupies places! And The One True God, Exalted be He, is not in need of possessing sections or parts such that He deals with things by them. [Then if we take this literally], are we to believe that His command and creation are carried out in the Fire such that He seeks help through something of His essence and deals with it (the Fire) with one of His Attributes, although He is the one who said [to the Fire kindled for Abraham]: *Be coolness and peace* (Qur'ān 21: 69)?[149]

How feeble-minded this belief is! Be it far removed from the Creator of all in the terrestrial and celestial realms! He has expressly declared them to be liars. He said: *If these were gods they would not have drawn near to it* (Qur'ān 21: 99) So how can it be believed that the Creator will draw near to it (i.e., Hell)? God is Exalted above the foolishness of those who liken Him to a human body!

The Twelfth Ḥadīth

Abū Hurayra related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The Non-believer's molar in the Fire will be like mount *Uhud.* And the density of his skin will be forty-two cubits by the cubit of the Omnipotent One." [150]

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[149] Translator: This clearly shows that all He has to say to bring something into existence is "Be!" and it is.

[150] Shaykh Ismā'īl 'Ajlūnī says in his book, *Kashf al-Khafā wa Muzīl al-Ilbās 'ammā ishtahara min al-AHādīth 'alā Alsinat al-Nās* ("Removing Obscurity and Confusion from the Ḥadīths that have Become Commonplace to Hear from the Tongues of People"), "Muslim related it from Abū Hurayra going back to the Prophet ﷺ. Aḥmad,

Abū ʿUmar, the Scrupulous, said, "*Al-Jabbār* (The Omnipotent One) here means 'The Tall One.' The Arabs called a date-palm tree that is tall, *jabbāra*."[151] Qāḍī [Abū Yaʿlā] said, "We understand it according to its outward form, while *al-Jabbār* is God, Mighty and Majestic."

This is unbelievable! Have they lost their minds?! Is it permissible to say that the cubit (*dhirāʿ*) is forty-two times [in length] until it reaches the [size of the] non-believer's skin and believe that there is some connection to The Beginningless Essence of The Divine? God is Exalted high above [this egregious blasphemy]!

The Thirteenth Ḥadīth

Qāḍī [Abū Yaʿlā] relates about Mujāhid that he said, "When the Day of Resurrection comes, David, upon him be blessing and peace, will mention his oversight and God, Exalted be He, will say, "Come to Me!" Then he will say, "O Lord! But my oversight! My offense!" Then He will say, "Get behind Me!" Then he will say, "O Lord! But my offense!" Then He will say, "Take hold of My foot!"" And in one wording on the authority of Ibn Sīrīn he said, "Verily God, Exalted be He, will bring David close until he places his hand on His Thigh."

It is unbelievable that one would attribute such a thing to the One True God, Glorified and Exalted is He, with the statements of one of the disciple's of the Prophet's companions, while it has

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Ṭabarānī, and Bayhaqī [related it] from Ibn ʿUmar going back to the Prophet ﷺ and Tirmidhī from Abū Hurayra [with similar wordings]."

[151] Ibn Qutayba says in his book, *Taʾwīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*, during his discussion of this ḥadīth, "We say that this ḥadīth has a sound interpretation if the Prophet ﷺ intended it. It is that 'al-Jabbār' in this instance is a reference to the king. God, Exalted be He, says: *And you are not over them a tyrant [king]* (Qur'ān 50: 45). That is, 'an overlord,' and the 'jabābira' (plural of jabbār) are 'the kings.' This is akin to people saying: 'he is such and such cubits by the king's cubit [measure].' They mean 'by the largest cubit.' And I believe that he was one of the non-Arab kings who had a perfect-sized forearm. So it was attributed to him."

not been soundly established that it is transmitted by them! If it were sound, they would be relating it from the People of the Book as Wahb ibn Munabbih mentions. But, Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "We hold it on its literal meaning, because we are not affirming a foot or thigh that would be a limb." This is simply amazing! They have completed the structure of the body by affirming a thigh, a shin, a face, two hands, fingers, a little finger, a thumb, ascent, and descent. And [then] they say, "They are construed according to their apparent meanings," but qualify by stating, "While they are not limbs."

Would any sane person really affirm for God, Exalted be He, a backside, a front side, and a thigh? We should not even make the effort to sit and speak with such people as these, since we know what the thigh is. But they immediately jump and say, "It isn't a thigh. And the backside isn't a backside." No one should seek to have any form of intelligent conversation with these people, for they will only insult your intelligence and speak to you as children.

The Fourteenth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that Abū Hurayra reported the Prophet ﷺ as saying,"God laughs at two men, one of them kills the other, both of them will enter Paradise." In the *Afrād* of Imām Muslim it is reported that Ibn Mas'ūd said that the Messenger of God ﷺ was told about the last person who will enter Paradise and he laughed. He was then asked, "Why are you laughing?" He replied, "Because of the laughter of the Lord of the worlds."

You should keep in mind that the word *dahk* (literally laughing) has a number of meanings that all originate from "clarification" and "manifestation." Anyone who reveals a matter that was hidden, it is said of him [in Arabic]: "he laughed." It is said, [for example] "The Earth laughed with vegetation when it appears in it and brings forth its flowers." This is [also] the same thing when it is said, "The sky cried." The poet said: "Every day the Earth laughs with a new daisy/From the crying of the sky."

Laughter that seizes people is merely a reference to when someone manifests the teeth that are concealed by the mouth. But this is impossible with respect to God, Glorified and Exalted is He. It is [therefore] necessary to construe it to mean, "God manifested His generosity and graciousness."

And the meaning of, "I laughed because of the laughter of my Lord," is "I [laughed by revealing my teeth and opening my mouth] because of my Lord's manifestation of His Generosity and Graciousness." It has [also] been related in a ḥadīth designated to a Companion that, "He laughed until His uvulas and molars showed." Khallāl mentioned it in *Kitāb al-Sunna*.

Al-Marwazi said, "I said to Abū 'Abd Allāh: 'What do you say about this ḥadīth?' He said, 'It should be given some consideration.' Then he said, 'Assuming its soundness, two interpretations are possible. The first of them is that "he" refers to the Prophet ﷺ. It is as if he laughed when he was told about The Lord's laughter, Splendid is His Majesty, until his uvulas and molars showed. And this is the correct interpretation if the ḥadīth's soundness is confirmed. The second [interpretation] is that it is a metaphor indicating the greatness of generosity and the broad scope of satisfaction just as He drew a metaphor in His saying, "And whoever comes to me walking [a normal pace] I'll come to him walking [quickly]."[152] But, Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] said,

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[152] Translator: The complete wording in the first narration of this ḥadīth is mentioned in Imām Muslim's collection. It reads that God–High is He–says: "I am with My slave's thought of Me. And I am with him when He mentions Me. If He mentions Me to his self, I mention him to Myself. If he mentions me in an assembly, I mention Him in an assembly better than them. If he draws near to Me a handspan, I draw near to him a cubit. If he draws near to Me a cubit, I draw near to him the length of both arms spread out. And if he comes to Me walking at a normal pace, I come

"Adopting the [understanding of the] outward meaning of the ḥadīths is not prohibited while allowing them to pass on their outward forms without reassigning their literal meanings."

How amazing! He has affirmed attributes for God, Exalted be He, with reports with slender documentary base and expressions not confirmed to be sound, just as he affirmed [for Him] the [existence of] molars. He has no good to take from Islām![153]

The Fifteenth Ḥadīth

Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] related a ḥadīth designated to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar in which he said, "God, Exalted be He, created the angels from the light of the forearms and the chest."

By it, Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] affirmed for God, Mighty and Majestic, forearms and a chest, this is despicable, because this report is a ḥadīth that is not elevated [to the Prophet] nor is it of a sound transmission. Does it make the slightest bit of sense that the created thing is made from the Essence of The Beginningless One? This is more deplorable than what Christians claimed!

The Sixteenth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥī ḥs* that Ibn 'Umar reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The believer will be brought close to his Lord. Then He will place His wing (*kanaf*) over him, and then say: 'Do you recognize this sin?'"

The scholars said, "He will bring him close to His mercy and kindness." Ibn Anbāri said, "His wing is His protection and

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to Him walking quickly." See *Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ḥadīth #2675, *Kitab al-dhikr wa al-Du'a.*

[153] Translator: What has been translated as 'He has no good to take from Islam' is the expression فما عنده من الإسلام خير. In the 1998 publication of *Daf' al-shubah* from *al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li al-Turāth*, it reads:

فما عنده من الإسلام خير which could be translated as meaning "So he has no news/ report from Islam." I felt that this was a possible misrepresentation of the original text, so I replaced '*Khabar*' (news/report) with '*Khayr.*' (good). And God knows best.

screen. It is said: 'So and so screened so and so' when he protects him and screens him. And everything that screens another has guarded it. The shield is called a *kanīf* because it screens its owner."

But, Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "He will bring him close to His Essence." These words come from someone who does not know God, Glorified and Exalted be He. He does not even know that coming close in terms of distance is something that is not possible in His regard. Compare this with the transmitted statement, "Verily, He draws near on the day of '*Arafa*," meaning that He will approach by way of His Kindness and Forgiveness.[154]

The Seventeenth Ḥadīth

Muslim related in his *Afrād* that Mu'āwiya ibn al-Hakam said, "I had a slave-girl who used to graze some small livestock for me. One day she left [them alone] and suddenly a wolf made away with a sheep. So I gave her a severe slapping. I then went to the Messenger of God ﷺ and he emphasized the seriousness [of what I had done] to me. So I said, 'Should I free her?' He said, 'Bring her to me.' He then asked her, 'Where is God, Exalted be He?' She said, 'In Heaven.' The Messenger of God ﷺ then asked, 'Who am I?' She said, 'The Messenger of God.' The Messenger of God ﷺ said, 'Free her, for indeed she is a believer.'"

It has been established by the scholars that God, Exalted be He, can neither be contained by Heaven nor Earth nor do the [different] regions of land embrace Him. Thus, the only thing recognised by her gesture is the Creator's greatness to her—Splendid is His Majesty.

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[154] Translator: Ibn Mājah reports a ḥadīth on the authority of 'Āisha, may God be pleased with her, that the Messenger of God ﷺ said: "There is no day that God frees more slaves from the Fire than the Day of 'Arafa. Verily He draws near, and then boasts of them to the angels saying: "What do these (people) want?"" See *Kitāb al-Manāsik*, Chapter 56 Supplication at 'Arafa, ḥadīth #3014

The Eighteenth Ḥadīth

Abū Razīn relates this ḥadīth. He said, "I said, 'O Messenger of God! Where was our Lord before creating His creation?' He said, 'He was in [dark] clouds. All below it was air and all above it was air. Then He created His Throne over the water.'"[155]

'*Amā* means clouds, but know that the directions of above and below refer to the clouds, not to God, Exalted be He. And [the preposition] "in" has the meaning of "above." So, the meaning would be, "He was over the clouds in terms of management and subjection."[156]

Since people were familiar with created things they would ask about them, and the clouds are part of the composite whole of His creation. Had they asked about what was before the clouds the Messenger of God ﷺ would have answered that God, Exalted be He, existed while there was nothing else with Him as has been related from the Messenger of God ﷺ "God—Sanctified and Exalted is He—existed while there was nothing else with Him."

And we do not say that any of God's creation is over Him by any means, and He does not take up residence in objects with His essence, nor does He withdraw from them, because if He had taken up residence in them, He would be a part of them.

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[155] Imām Aḥmad related it in his *Musnad*, Ibn Jarīr in *Tahdhīb al-Āthār*, Tabarānī in *al-Kabīr*, and Abū Shaykh in *al-'Azama* (Cf., *Jami' al-Jawāmi'*).

[156] Translator: Furthermore this ḥadīth is weak. Both Tirmidhī and Aḥmad reported it on the authority of Abū Razīn al-'Uqaylī, and Wakī' ibn Hudus was the only one to relate it on the authority of his paternal uncle, Abū Razīn Abū Mus'ab al-'Uqaylī al-Tā'ifī. Ibn Qutayba said about Wakī', "He is unknown." Ibn Qattān said, "He is of unknown status." Ibn Hibbān mentioned him amongst the reliable narrators, and Ibn Hajar said about him, "He is acceptable." What is known from the methodology of Ibn Hajar is that when he grades a particular narrator as being "acceptable," it means that he has narrated a few ḥadīths, and that he is not valid as a proof unless his narration is supported by a separate narrator who is at the minimum, just as strong as he is. However, Wakī's report has not been strengthened by either a strong or weak narrator, and so the classification of the ḥadīth is obvious.

[Likewise] if He withdrew from them, He would be at a distance from them.

The Nineteenth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that Abū Hurayra narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Our Lord descends every night to the sky of the world when the last third of the night remains. He says, 'Who calls on Me, so that I can answer him?'"

Twenty Companions related the ḥadīth of the descent, and the statement that motion, translocation, and change are impossible with respect to Him, Mighty and Majestic, has already been touched upon. So there remain two types of people with respect to this narrative.

There is the one who interprets it to mean that "He brings His mercy close," just as He has expressed [other] things as descending as well. He said Exalted be He: *And We sent down Iron. In it is great strength* (Qur'ān 57:25), even though its mineral is from the Earth. He also said: *And He sent down for you of cattle eight pairs* (Qur'ān 39:6). The one who does not know the descent of the camel, how can he speak about the camel?

The second position is to refrain from speaking about it while adopting the belief that God is free of imperfection. The duty of all people is to believe in God's perfect state and to deny the possibility of Him changing from one location to another, [just as they are to believe] that the "descent" (*nuzul*) in the ḥadīth, which is to transfer from place to place, requires three composite bodies: a body above that is a place for its occupant, a body below, and a body that transfers from Highness to lowness. But, this is not possible with respect to God, Mighty and Majestic.

But, Ibn Hāmid said, "He is on the Throne in His Essence, making physical contact with it, and He descends from His place that He occupies and He changes from one place to another."

This is a man who does not know what is possible with respect to God, Exalted be He.

Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "The Descent is an attribute of the Essence. And we do not say that it is the descent that means 'changing from one place to another.'" This one is a deceptive sophist! And one of them said, "He moves when He descends." He does not know that motion is not possible with respect to God, Exalted be He. They also related that Imām Aḥmad made a similar declaration even though it is a lie on him.[157] So if the descent were an essential attribute for His essence, it would be an attribute that is renewed every night.[158] But His Attributes are beginningless like His Essence.

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[157] Abū Ya'lā related that in his *Tabaqāt* from Aḥmad by way of Abū al-'Abbās al-Istakhurī, and it is as the author said: "a concocted report." It is strange that Ibn Taymiyya recorded it in his *Ma'qūl*–without objecting–what Harb ibn Ismā'īl al-Karmānī, the disciple of Muḥammad ibn Karrām, relates in his *Masā'il* about Aḥmad and others in reference to Him, Glory to Him! [It reads]: "[...] He talks and moves [...]" He also conveyed from Dārimī's *al-Naqd*–while remaining silent or concurring– [that he said]: "The Living, The Self-Subsisting does what He pleases. He moves when He pleases, He descends and ascends when He pleases, He grabs and extends, and He stands and sits when He pleases, because the sign distinguishing between the living and the dead is movement. Every living thing undoubtedly moves, and every lifeless thing undoubtedly does not move." [It was also related that Ibn Taymiyya while discussing the ḥadīth of the descent was asked how God descends] so, he descended two steps down from the pulpit, and then said: "Like this descent of mine." As a result, he was accused of being an Anthropomorphist.

[158] One of the things that Ibn Ḥazm mentions about the ḥadīth of the descent is, "This is merely an action that God does, Exalted in Highness, in the sky of the ephemeral world, which means 'to open up to accept supplication.' That hour is one of the most likely times of acceptance, response, and forgiveness for the diligent, those seeking forgiveness, and those [who are] repenting. This is well-known in the language [of the Arabs]. They say: 'Fulān descended from his right for me,' meaning that 'he gave it and he conferred it to me.' One of the proofs of it being an attribute of action, not an attribute of the essence, is that the Messenger of God ﷺ attached the aforementioned descent to a particular time. So it holds true that it is an action brought into existence at that time, done at that instance. We already know that whatever is without beginning, cannot be attached to a particular time by any means. The Messenger of God ﷺ made clear in some versions of the aforementioned ḥadīth what that action is. It is that he mentioned ﷺ that God commands an angel who is summoned at that time to do that. Furthermore, the third of the night differs from one land to another according to the different times of

The Twentieth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that Abū Hurayra narrated that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "Verily I am exhausted." So he ﷺ said, "Who will host him tonight?" So a man from the Ansār stood up and said, "I will, O Messenger of God!" Then he went with him to his wife, and then said, "Do you have anything?" She said, "No. Only the food of my children." He said, "Then distract them somehow when the children want dinner, and then put them to sleep, so [that] when our guest comes in, put out the lamp and make him think that we are eating." So they sat down and the guest ate. Then when the morning came he went to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "God, Exalted be He, was amazed with how you behaved with your guest last night."

It is related in Bukhāri's *Afrād* that Abū Hurayra narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "God is amazed by people who are dragged in chains until they enter Paradise."

The scholars state, "Amazement results only from something that comes unexpectedly to a person of which he does not know, and then he regards it as something great. It does not befit the Creator, Splendid is His Majesty." Rather, its meaning is that the value of that thing is great to God, since the one who is amazed by something its value is great to him. What is meant by the "chains" is that they were forced into compliance, [a manner] by which they will enter Paradise. Ibn Anbāri said, "The meaning

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sunrise and sunset, and whoever has conducted a study knows that immediately. So it holds true immediately that it is an action done by the Lord, Exalted in Highness, at that time for the people of each horizon. As for he who determined that to be translocation, we have already set forth the invalidation of his statement in *Ibṭāl al-Qawl bi al-Jism.*"

Translator: On the basis of these comments by Ibn Ḥazm, may God show him mercy, the fact that a particular third part of the night is always a reality in a particular part of the globe necessitates that God is always in the sky of the ephemeral world. This would mean that He is never on His Throne since He is in a constant state of descent.

of, 'Your Lord was amazed' is that He increased them in blessing and good treatment. So he expressed that in this ḥadīth through [the word] 'amazement.'"

The Twenty-First Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that Abū Hurayra narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "God has greater joy from the repentance of one of you than one of you experiences from his lost animal when he finds it."

I would say of this that when He is delighted with something, and satisfied, it is said that, "He rejoiced." The intent is merely to express satisfaction with the repentance of the one in question, and it is not permissible to believe about God, Glorified and Exalted be He, the sensation that is experienced by created beings. For surely, the Attributes of The One True God, Exalted be He, are beginingless. None of His Attributes are created.

The Twenty-Second Ḥadīth

Muslim related in his *Afrād* that Abū Mūsā, narrated, "The Messenger of God ﷺ stood amongst us and made five brief pronouncements. He said, 'Verily God, Exalted be He, does not sleep and it is not proper that He sleeps. He lessens justice and increases it. His veil is light. If He removed it, the Majestic Splendor of His Face would incinerate all that His sight reaches of His creation.'"[159]

As for his statement, "His Veil is light," it should be known that this veil of His belongs to the creation, because it is not possible for Him to be veiled, since the veil would be larger than what it covers. And just as it is not possible for there to be a beginning and an end to His Existence, it is not correct for there to be a limit for His Essence. The intent is merely that created beings are veiled from Him as He said, Exalted in Highness: *Nay! Verily they will be veiled from their Lord on that day* (Qur'ān 85: 15). As for the Majestic splendor, it is the plural of *subha*. It is said that the *subha* is the splendor of His Face. An example of this is His saying, *Glory to God*. It is merely a glorification of Him and an expression of His perfect state. But, Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "There is no harm in applying the expression, 'a veil beyond God, not for ascribing a boundary to Him and not that it runs parallel to His being.'" This is the statement of a confused person by which he seeks to placate the common people.

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[159] Nawawī says in *Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, "And the estimation is that: 'If He removed the thing hindering Him from being seen–it is the veil (*Hijāb*) refered to as 'light' or 'fire'–and He became manifest to His creation, the splendor of His being would incinerate all of His creatures."

The Twenty-Third Ḥadīth

Ibn 'Abbās related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily the People of Paradise will see their Lord, Exalted be He, every Friday in the sands of *Kāfūr*. Those sitting closest to Him will be those who came to Him the fastest on the Day of Resurrection."

His statement, "In the sands of Kāfūr," is an allusion to those who will be present there in the sands of *Kāfūr*, and "the closest of them to Him" means the most fortunate of them "In His sight." In another ḥadīth, it states, "The Just on the Day of Resurrection will be on pulpits of light on the right-hand side of the All-Merciful One." Some of them said, "The right-hand side of the Throne." In the ḥadīth about the market place of Paradise, it says, "And there will not remain a single person in that sitting place that God will speak to without a mediator." It has been related [in another version] as, "He will grab him by the waist" with a *khā* (خ) provided with a diacritical point.

This [ḥadīth], is related by Yūsuf ibn 'Abd Allāh, and is an error. "Grabbing by the waist," means, "To shake hands." But, Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "It is not impossible for The One True

God, Exalted be He, to be in the sands of *Kāfūr*." Here, he has acknowledged a limit for the Essence of God. Then he said, "Not meaning that He goes from place to place." This [preposterous] thing is a game to him! Then he said, "And it is not impossible for them to draw near to the Divine Essence." But with this [interpretation] the ḥadīth is spoiled. He also sought proof through the Prophet's statement, "Every single one of you, will be alone with His Lord, Exalted be He. The Qādī said, "Seclusion is a way of expressing nearness, and nearness to the Divine Essence is possible." And the refutation of this has already passed.

The Twenty-Fourth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that Ibn Mas'ūd said that, "A Jewish scholar came to the Prophet ﷺ and then said, 'O Muḥammad! Surely God will hold the Heavens on the Day of Resurrection on a finger, the Earth's on a finger, the mountains and the trees on a finger [...].'" In another narration the wording is "[...] and the water and the soil on a finger. Then He will shake them." So the Messenger of God ﷺ smiled and then he said: "*And they have not considered God according to His true worth* (Qur'ān 39: 67)."

I would answer this by stating that the apparent reason for the Prophet's smile, ﷺ is [to show his] disapproval [of the Jew's statement].[160] The Jews liken God to His Creation, and the revelation of the verse is proof of the Messenger's condemnation of such beliefs. Similar in meaning to this ḥadīth is his saying, "Verily the hearts of the children of Adam are between two of the fingers of the All-Merciful One. He turns them about however He pleases." Since the heart between two fingers is tractable and subdued, this indicates that the one who turns them about subjugates hearts. But, Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "It is not wrong to hold and understand the report according to its outward meaning in affirming fingers as Attributes that refer back to the Divine Essence, since we do not affirm fingers that are limbs and parts."

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[160] Ibn Khuzayma (he is the one who fell into the error of anthropomorphism) considers it unlikely that the Prophet's laugh ﷺ was out of disapproval. But Hāfiz ibn Hajar has invalidated this claim of his in *al-Fath*.

This is the statement of a confused person, because he is either to affirm limbs or he is to interpret it. As for understanding and holding them on their outward meanings, their outward meanings are limbs. Then he says, "But they are not parts." So this is the statement of one who stands while sitting down. So the comments of whoever states this are spoiled.

The Twenty-Fifth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim relate in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that Ibn 'Umar narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "God, Mighty and Majestic, will fold the Heavens on the Day of Resurrection. Then He will seize them in His right hand. Then He will say, 'I am the King! Where are the mighty ones? Where are the proud ones?'"[161] This is how Muslim related it, and it is the most complete of all versions.

It has been established with decisive proof that the hand of The One True God, Glorified and Exalted be He, is not a limb, and that his clasp of things is not carried out through direct contact, nor does He have need of a palm. The Messenger of God ﷺ merely brought [its meaning] close to the faculties of comprehension in a way that human beings could understand it. As for the version mentioning "The left hand," it is totally weak. It has been soundly established about the Messenger of God ﷺ that he said, "And both of His hands are a blessed right hand." [162] So this weakens the mention of the left hand.

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[161] In the copies of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* that we have, there is the addition, "Then He will fold the Earths with His left hand."

[162] Al-Qutaybī says during the discussion of this ḥadīth, "He merely meant by that [to express] the meaning of 'completion' and 'perfection' since the left sides of all things are lesser than their right sides in strength, force, and perfection. The Arabs used

The Twenty-Sixth Ḥadīth

Imām Aḥmad, may God have mercy on him, related in his *Musnad* that Anas reported that the Prophet ﷺ said regarding His saying, Exalted be He: *So when his Lord became manifest to the mountain* (Qur'ān 7:143) that, "It means that He pulled out the tip of the little finger." And in one wording [he said], "Then He gestured with His little finger and the mountain sunk into the ground." Ibn Hāmid recited, "So when his Lord became manifest to the mountain, the first joint of His little finger came out of it."

This ḥadīth is one that the scholars of ḥadīth have commented on. They said, "No one has related it from a reliable transmitter other than Hamād ibn Salama, and Ibn al-'Awjā', the crypto-infidel, who introduced some deplorable things to Hamād which he related towards the end of his life. For that reason, some authors of sound ḥadīth collections shunned reporting on his authority." Even still, explaining this ḥadīth is easy, and that is because the Prophet ﷺ used to bring [its meaning] close to the faculties of [people's] comprehension by mentioning perceptible things. So he placed his hand on his little finger alluding to the fact that God, Exalted in Highness, revealed something simple of His Signs.

The Twenty-Seventh Ḥadīth

Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] related from 'Ikrima, that 'Ikrima said, "Whenever God, Mighty and Majestic, wants to frighten His servants, He reveals some of His self to the Earth, and then it

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to love to do things with their right hands, and they despised [what they did with] their left hands due to the perfection found in the right hand and the imperfection found in the left hand. It is possible that it means 'giving with both hands together,' since the right hand is the one that gives. So if both hands are right hands, giving happens with both of them. Mirār adopted this view when he said: "And [ruling] over Iwāna is one who is profoundly wise–A young man, both of his hands are a right hand."

quakes. And whenever God wants to crush a people, He becomes manifest to them."

Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "He reveals some of Himself" is held according to its outward form. It refers to the Divine Essence in a manner that does not lead to the ascription of parts."

I would say that whoever says, "He revealed some of His Essence while it is not a combination of parts." should not be entertained with conversation. Rather the intent of the narration would be that He manifested some of His signs.

The Twenty-Eighth Ḥadīth

Abū al-Akhmas al-Jumhī related that the Messenger of God ﷺ asked him, "Is it true that you take your razor and cut the ears of some of the camels [becaue of superstition], and then say, 'This is a sacrifice?' And do you split the ear of the other, and then say, '[This is] a severance *for protection*?' He said, 'Yes.' The Messenger of God ﷺ said, 'Then do not do it! For verily God's razor, Exalted be He, is sharper than your razor, and God's upper arm, Exalted in Highness, is firmer than your upper arm.'"

Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "There is no objection to holding the report according to its outward meaning in its confirmation of the 'upper arm' as an Attribute of His Essence."

[Well, if that is so] I would then state [in response] that the intended meaning by the mention of the "upper arm" is [merely] "strength," since a man's strength rests in his upper arm. [Based on the Qadi's logic] he should have also affirmed [that God has] a razor too.

The Twenty-Ninth Ḥadīth

Abū Hurayra related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily whenever the servant stands up to prayer, he is between the two eyes of the All-Merciful One."

We have already mentioned the attribute of "the eye" in the aforementioned verses before the discussion of the ḥadīths. What is intended by this ḥadīth is that, "God, Exalted be He, sees the praying person. So let [those] who are praying to Him show correct manners while in His Presence." Likewise is his saying, "[...] For verily God is in the direction of his face," meaning that He sees him [the person praying].

The Thirtieth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that 'Āisha, may God be pleased with her, reported that the Prophet ﷺ appeared while she was hosting a woman. He said, "Who is this?" She said: "*Fulāna.*[163] She is asking me about her prayer." He said: "Burden yourself with what you have the capacity to do! For by God, God, Exalted be He, does not get bored until you get bored." In another report, the wording is, "God, Exalted be He, does not grow weary until you grow weary."

The scholars state, "The meaning of the ḥadīth is God, Exalted be He, does not get bored even if you get bored as the poet said: "Hudhayl burned Mina with rags/Mischief does not get bored until they get bored."

The true meaning is it (mischief) does not get bored even if they get bored [of doing a certain thing]. Otherwise, Hudhayl would have no superiority over them (the people of Mina). And some people said, "Whoever gets bored of something [they] abandon it." So the meaning is He does not abandon giving reward as long as they do not abandon doing good works.

As for "boredom," it means, "The dislike of something; to consider it annoying; for the soul to have an aversion towards it, and to grow weary of it," which is impossible in His regard, Exalted be He. If this was possible it would mean to affirm for

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[163] Translator: The words *Fulān* and *Fulāna* are used in Arabic and translate in English as 'So and So.'

Him change and for created things to take up residence in His being.

The Thirty-First Ḥadīth

Khawla bint Hakīm related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily the last step the All-Merciful One took was in Wajj."

Wajj is actually a ravine in Ṭā'if, and it is the last blow by which God, Exalted be He, struck the polytheists [in war] at the hand of the Messenger of God ﷺ. And like it is his saying, ﷺ "O God! Increase your step against Mudar!" And it (the step) is taken with the foot. Ibn Qutayba and others held this view. But, Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "It is not wrong according to our principles to hold this report on its outward meaning, and that it is a Characteristic of the Essence, not of action, since we held his saying, "He descends" and "He puts His foot in the Fire," to refer to the Divine Essence."

This man alludes by "their principles" to what necessitates the ascription of a body, translocation, and motion. And this man, while likening God to His Creation, is far from understanding the language, the knowledge of historical events and the proofs of logic. He was misled by a ḥadīth that was related about Ka'b that he said, "Wajj is sacred. From it the Lord ascended to Heaven. Then He completed the creation of the Earth."

If this was soundly established from Ka'b it is possible that he is narrating on the authority of the People of the Book, from whom he used to narrate much. If we presumed it to be one of his statements, its meaning would be that, "That place was the last part of the Earth that became leveled. Then the Lord ascended," He undertook the creation of Heaven. And it is as His saying, Exalted be He: *Then He turned toward Heaven while it was smoke* (Qur'ān 41: 11).

It has been related by Abū Hurayra that the Prophet ﷺ said, "When I was taken by night, Gabriel, upon him be blessing and peace, passed by me until he came to the Rock. Then he said: 'O Muḥammad! From here your Lord ascended to Heaven.'"

Bakr ibn Ziyād relates this. He used to fabricate ḥadīths against reliable transmitters. So if it is said, Ibn 'Abbās, may God be pleased with him, said that, *He turned to Heaven* means He ascended, we would say, "His command ascended," since moving from one place to another and change are not possible in His regard.

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<Sub section>

And know that people have three positions regarding "The Information on Attributes":

The first position is to let them pass as they came without explanation or interpretation unless it is necessary as in the case of His saying, Exalted be He: *And your Lord comes* (Qur'ān 89: 22) which means, "when His command comes." This is the understanding of the *Salaf*. The second method is figurative interpretation, which is a dangerous position,[164] and the third

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[164] He says in *Sharh al-Mishkāt*, "Nawawī said in *Sharh Muslim*: 'With respect to this ḥadīth (ḥadīth *al-nuzūl*) and the like of it of the ḥadīths containing the divine attributes and their verses, there are two well-known approaches: The approach of most of the *Salaf* and some of the speculative theologians is to believe in their true nature according to what befits Him, Exalted be He, and that their literal meanings that are commonly acknowledged with reference to us are not intended. We are to not discuss their meanings but all the while believing in God's being exalted, Glory to Him, from having all of the other characteristics of creation. The second is the approach of most of the speculative theologians and a portion of the *Salaf*. It is related about Mālik and Awzā'ī that they said they are to be interpreted in a way befitting them according to their non-literal meanings. Accordingly, the report is to be interpreted with two [different forms of] interpretations." By his comments and the comments of Shaykh al-Rabbāni Abū Ishāq Shayrāzi, Imām al-Haramayn, Ghazālī, and other than them of our Imāms, it is known that the two approaches (that of the

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Salaf and the *Khalaf* ("Those that followed." A name used for Muslims that came after the *Salaf*)) are in agreement about directing these apparent meanings, like the coming, the form, the person, the foot, the hand, the face, the anger, the mercy, the establishment on the Throne, being in Heaven, and other things away from their literal meanings, due to the impossibilities they necessitate that are clearly invalid, which necessitate things that induce one to apostasy by consensus. Thus, the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf* were compelled to divert the words from their literal meaning. They merely differed about, 'Should we divert it from its literal sense while believing that God, Exalted be He, is characterised with what befits His Majesty and Greatness without interpreting it with anything else [or should we mention something else]? The *latter* is the approach of most of the *Khalaf*, and it is a detailed interpretation. By that they did not intend to oppose the Righteous Forebearers. God forbid that that be thought about them! It was merely the urgency during their times that called them to that because of the great number of those who give God bodily qualities, those who deny His [true] Attributes and other deviant sects and their achievement of mastery over the minds of the masses. By that, they sought to inhibit them and to invalidate their view. For that reason many of them apologised and said: "If we were similar to the righteous forebearers in purity of beliefs and the absence of those who champion falsehood during their time, we would not have indulged in the interpretation of any of that." We know that Mālik and Awzā'ī–while being amongst the most distinguished figures of the *Salaf*–interpreted in a detailed fashion. Sufyān al-Thawrī interpreted the 'establishment on the Throne' as meaning 'He pursued its affair' and *Then He turned to Heaven* (Qur'ān 2: 29) to mean 'He turned His attention to it." With them is Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq. Furthermore, a group of them and the *Khalaf* said that, "The one who believes in direction is an unbeliever" as al-'Irāqī unequivocally expressed. He said that it is the view of Abū Hanīfa, Mālik, Shāfi'ī, Ash'arī, and Bāqillānī. The other Muslim factions agreed upon interpreting the like of: *And He is with you wherever you are, There is not a secret counsel of three except that He is the fourth, So wherever you turn there is God's face, And We are closer to him than his jugular vein* (Qur'ān 57: 4, 58: 7, 2: 115, and 50: 16), "The heart of the believer is between two of the fingers of the All-Merciful One," and "The black stone is God's right hand in the Earth." This agreement clarifies to you the correctness of what the master legal critics of scripture chose in that the appropriate stop (in reciting and understanding the verse of Āli 'Imrān 3: 6) should be made on *And those deeply-rooted in knowledge,* (Qur'ān 3:6) not on the name of majesty." I would say that the majority holds the view that the appropriate stop is on *except God,* and they consider the stop on it to be a compulsory one. It is the apparent indication, since the meaning of *ta'wīl* is 'its meaning' that He intended, Exalted be He. In reality, none know it except God, Splendid is His Majesty and there is no God other than Him. Everyone who has spoken about it has spoken according to what appeared to him, but no one was able to say that 'this [particular] meaning is God's intent' decisively. So after close scrutiny it turns out that the difference of opinion is just in the manner of expression. Therefore, many of the latter day examiners chose not to specify a particular interpretation in any specific one of the things that fit the phrase. They entrusted the specific intent to His knowledge, Exalted be He. This is a medial stance between the two approaches, a delight experienced between the way is speaking about them according to human understanding

two drinking pools, and Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd chose another position of moderation. He said, "If the interpretation is an example of the widely-used clear metaphor, then following it is to be done without hesitation. Or if it is an example of the irregular far-fetched metaphor, then the correct thing to do is to abandon it. If the two matters are equal, then the variance about its permissibility and non-admissibility is a matter of jurisprudence, subject to *ijtihad* and the case with respect to it is not one of peril with respect to either of the two factions. I, however, maintain neutrality in its regard due to the lack of preponderance of one of the sides, in addition to the fact that neutrality is supported by the view of the *Salaf*, and amongst them is The Greatest Imām (Abū Ḥanīfa)."

He also says in *Sharh al-Mishkāt*, "The result is that both the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf* are interpreters because of their unanimous agreement on diverting the word from its literal meaning. However, the interpretation of the *Salaf* was non-specific because of their consignment of the meaning to God, Exalted be He. The interpretation of the *Khalaf* was detailed because they were compelled to do it as a result of the numerousness of heretics." In *Ishārāt al-Nabīh fī Kashf Shubah Ahl al-Tashbīh*, ("Hints for the Intelligent in Exposing the Doubt of Anthropomorphism") the dictation of Shaykh Najm al-Dīn Abū Fath Nasr Allāh al-'Izz ibn Sa'd Allāh ibn Najm, the author from Bağhdad, writes: "Scholars, philologists and poets have exercised interpretation anciently and recently. For that reason one of them said, "I say: 'The cheek has a mole,' whenever I remember it – fearing the one watching, although the cheek really has no mole. I cry [with my face] to the East whenever their homes face the West, out of fear of gossip." Whoever says, "I neither accept the permissibility of interpretatioin nor do I liken God with His Creation," has actually employed *ta'wīl* because if he deviates from the meaning of 'the descent' in his view and the meaning of 'the right hand' [as] in the ḥadīth, "The Black Stone is God's right hand in the Earth," to [mean] other than that, he has indeed employed interpretation (*ta'wīl*). So there is no escape for you from [employing] *ta'wīl* by any means."

The Most Erudite Alûsī says in his exegesis during the discussion of the 'face,' "And the interpretation that is easily understood by the mind is the like of which is widely accepted in the speech of the Arabs which have no objection from me, even though some of the verses are of what the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf* have reached a consensus concerning [the obligation of] interpreting while God, Exalted in Highness, knows best His intent." He also said, "And I incline towards figurative interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and not to cling to the literal meanings while negating what is necessitated regarding some of what is ascribed to God like [in] His saying, *We shall devote Our attention to you, O men and Jinn!* (Qur'ān 55: 31) and his saying, may God bless and grant him peace, "The Black Stone is God's right hand in the Earth, so whoever kisses it or touches it, it is as if he has shaken hands with God and kissed His right hand." I would make the discussion of it outside of the sphere of likening God to His Creation because of the existence of the justification for interpretation. I don't say: "The Black Stone is one of His attributes" similarly as the *Salaf* said about the right hand." Ibn al-Mu'lim designated a chapter in his book, *Najm al-Muhtadī wa Rajm al-Mu'tadī* ("Rise of the Guided and Expulsion of the Transgressor") where he enumerated the majority of those who chose to interpret the sense of the statement in what is apparent in it amongst the *sahāba*, the *tābi'īn*, and others.

and perception. This method is pervasive amongst the ignorant transmitters, since they share no portion in the rational sciences by which it is known what is possible and impossible when discussing what is permissible to be attributed to God, Exalted be He. Indeed the rational sciences hinder the literal meanings of the transmitted reports from the error of likening God to His Creation. Since these ignorant transmitters do not know this science, they come to understand transmitted information in accordance with human understanding and perception.

And Qāḍī [Abū Ya'lā] alluded to this with his saying, "It is permissible to understand and hold that which The One True God—Exalted be He—treaded upon in accordance with our principles, and that it is a characteristic that pertains to the Divine Essence." But their principles according to his claim are based on human understanding.

If they had understood that God, Exalted be He, cannot be characterized by motion, translocation, or change, they would not have built their principles upon the ways that humans understand affairs. What is amazing is that he confirms this statement, and then he says, "This is without changing from one place to another and motion," thereby demolishing what he built.

One of the most astounding things that I have seen from them is what they mention about Ibn Abī Shayba, that he said in *Kitāb al-'Arsh*, "Verily God, Exalted be He, has informed us that He proceeded from the Earth to Heaven and from Heaven to the Throne. Then He became established on the Throne."

But we praise God, since He has not denied us our portion of narrations and the theoretical sciences. And we distance ourselves from people who have disgraced our *madhhab* to the point that people scolded us because of their comments.

The Thirty-Second Ḥadīth

Abū Umāma related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The servants do not draw near to God, Exalted in Highness, with anything like what has come out of Him."[165] And what has come out is the Qur'ān. In the ḥadīth of 'Affān, it is narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The virtue of the Qur'ān over all other speech is like the superiority of God, Exalted be He, over His creation. Verily the Qur'ān came from Him and to Him it will return."

The meaning is that it (the Qur'ān) reached us from Him and to Him it will return, and be raised up.

The Thirty-Third Ḥadīth

Abū Hurayra related that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Verily, God, Exalted be He, recited 'TāHā' and 'YāSīn' before creating Adam by one-thousand years. So when the angels heard this, they said, 'Blessings for a nation upon whom revelation is sent down! Blessings for hearts that bear this! And blessings for tongues that speak of it!'"

This is a fabricated and spurious ḥadīth. Ibrāhīm ibn al-Muhājir relates it from 'Umar ibn Hafs. As for 'Umar ibn Hafs, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said, "His ḥadīths were burned." Yahyā ibn Ma'īn said, "He is insignificant," while Abū Hātim ibn Hibbān al-Hāfiz said, "This is a spurious text."

The Thirty-Fourth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥī ḥs* that Abū Hurayra narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily God created the creation and once He was finished with them the womb stood up, and then said, 'Is this the station of the one who takes refuge with You from the severance of the ties of kinship?' He replied,

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[165] Suyūtī's writes in his *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr*, "The servants do not draw near to God with anything more beloved to Him than from what has come out of Him." It is reported by Ibn Sunni on the authority of Zayd ibn Artā from Abū Umāma.

'Yes. Are you not satisfied that I keep ties with he who keeps ties with you and I sever ties with he who severs ties with you?'"[166] In one wording that Bukhāri reports, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily the womb is a branch from the All-Merciful One."

Abū 'Ubayd said, "*al-Shajna* is like the branch of the tree." What is meant by branch (*shajna*) is "kinship intertwined like the intertwining of roots." It is [also] said that trees are *tushjanu* when they become entangled into one another.

I would say that this ḥadīth is subject to either one of two interpretations. It either means that God, Exalted be He, maintains the womb to the point that He keeps ties with him who keeps ties with it. He then cuts off the one who severs ties with it and takes its right for it just as the relative maintains his kinship. So it is as if someone gives more consideration to relatives than he would to non-relatives. It could also mean that the [word] *rahim* is [derived from] the [same] letters of [the name] "Al-Rahmān." (The All-Merciful) So it is as if He has magnified its value by giving it this name.'

The ḥadīth of 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Awf confirms this where he relates that the Prophet ﷺ said that, "God, Exalted be He, said, I am *al-Rahmān*. I created the womb (*rahim*), and I have derived its name from My Name. So whoever keeps ties to it, I will keep ties with him. And whoever severs ties to it, I will sever ties with him."

This ḥadīth has been mentioned with a wording that has not been reported in the sound ḥadīth collections. It says, "The womb is a branch from the All-Merciful. It clings to the lower garment of the All-Merciful. It says, 'O God! Keep ties with whoever keeps ties with me, and sever ties with whoever severs ties with me!'" In another narration it says, "The womb is a branch taking hold of the lower garment of the All-Merciful One." And yet in another narration it says, "When God, Exalted in Highness, created the creation the womb stood up. Then it took hold of the lower garment of the All-Merciful One, and then it said, 'This is the station of the one who takes refuge with You from the severance of ties.'"

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[166] In Imām Nawawī's commentary on *ṢaḥīḥMuslim*, he says, "Qādī 'Iyād said: 'The womb (*rahim*) that is connected to, severed from, and shown kindness is a particular characteristic. It is not a body, rather, it is kinship and lineage that a single womb unites to and part of it is connected to others. This connection was called 'a womb.' As for the [womb that is] a particular characteristic, it does not possess the capacity to stand and speak. So mentioning its standing up here and attaching is the coining of a similitude and a good metaphor as was the custom of the Arabs in utilizing that. The intent is to magnify its status and the virtues of those who keep ties to it and the gravity of the sin of those who sever ties with it through their disrepect."

All of these are examples that refer back to what we have explained. The meaning of it clinging to the lower garment of the All-Merciful One is "seeking shelter" and "protection."[167] Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqi said, "*Al-Haqw* is the lower garment (*izār*), and the meaning is that it develops an attachment to His might." But, Ibn Hāmid said, "It is compulsory to believe that God has a lower garment, and that the womb takes hold of His lower garment." He said, "Likewise we believe that God, Exalted be He, has a 'side' as a result of His saying, Exalted be He: *over what I have neglected in God's side*" (Qur'ān 39: 56).

This man has absolutely no understanding. How can negligence happen at the side of the Divine Essence? We take refuge with God from having inappropriate beliefs [about Him]!

The Thirty-Fifth Ḥadīth

Bukharī related in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*[168] that the Prophet ﷺ said, "God, Mighty and Majestic, says, 'Pride is my cloak, and Greatness is my lower garment. So whoever contests with me in them I will punish him.'"

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[167] He said in *al-Nihāya*, "And there is a metaphor and depiction expressed through the use of the word 'lower garment.' An example of it is: 'I take refuge with *Fulān's* lower garment' when you seek refuge with him and take protection." It is mentioned in *Asās al-Balāgha*: "He took shelter with his loins" when he fled to him."

[168] 'Ajlūni says in *Kashf al-Khafā wa Muzīl al-Ilbās 'ammā ishtahara min al-Ahādīth 'alā Alsinat al-Nās*, ("Removing Obscurity and Confusion from the Ḥadīths that have Become Commonplace to Hear from the Tongues of People") Muslim, Ibn

Abū Sulayman Khattābī said, "And in the statement, verily pride and greatness are two attributes of God, Exalted be He, of which He has exclusive possession. No one shares with Him in them, and it is not proper for a created being to assume them, because the attributes of the creation are humility and tractability. So He coined the the statement about the lower garment and cloak as a form of similitude."

It is as if God is saying—and He—Exalted be He—knows best, just as no one can share a man's cloak and lower garment with him [while he is wearing it], likewise no created thing can share with Him in Pride and Greatness.

The Thirty-Sixth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥī ḥs* that Abū Hurayra reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, "I am as my My servant thinks of Me, and I am with him when he mentions Me. So if He mentions Me to himself, I mention him to Myself, and if he mentions Me in an assembly, I mention him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws near to me a hand's span, I draw near to him an arm's span. And if he comes to me walking [at a normal pace, I come to him walking [quickly]."

Qādi [Abū Ya'lā] held the view that God, Exalted be He, has a self. It is an attribute added to the Divine Essence. This is the statement of a heretic who has numerous instances where he likens God to His creation. No distinction is made between the Essence and the Self.

Hibbān, Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Māja related it from Abū Hurayra as well as Ḥākim [with similar wording]. One of those who reported it with the wording of the chapter title is Qudā'ī from Abū Hurayra as well as al-Hakīm al-Tirmidhī from Anas." And he did not mention Bukhārī. So let it be noted.

What is it that prevents the meaning from being, "I—*Myself*—[not another] mentioned him?" This was presented during the discussion of the verses, and the mention of approximation and walking fast are a broadening in speech[169] (a metaphor) like His saying, Exalted in Highness: *And those who moved quickly in Our signs* (Qur'ān 22: 51) while walking is not what is intended.

The Thirty-Seventh Ḥadīth

Abū Sa'īd related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily God, Exalted be He, is beautiful and He loves beauty."[170]

The scholars have said, "It means He is the One who beautifies by giving beauty, morals and good treatment to forms." In my view, "The Beautiful One" is the one whose characteristics are perfect and deemed beautiful. But, Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] gave an explanation that is not befitting The One True God, Glorified and Exalted be He. He said, "It is not forbidden to describe Him with possessing beauty. For verily, that is a reference to the Divine Essence, since *jamāl* takes on the meaning of 'beauty.'" And the Prophet's statement ﷺ "I saw my Lord in the most beautiful form." has already been discussed.

The Thirty-Eighth Ḥadīth

Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] related that 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz said, "When God, Exalted be He, has finished with the People of Paradise and the People of the Fire, He will proceed to walk in canopies of clouds and angels. Then He will stop on the first level and greet them [with peace], and they will return the greeting to Him. Then He will say, 'Ask Me,' and they will say, 'What should we ask? By Your Might, Majesty, and Elevation in the Highness of Your place, if you had dispensed among us the sustenance all of humans and *Jinn*, we would have fed them and given them drink, and it would not diminish what we have.' Then He will say, Exalted be He, 'Surely ask Me!' They will say, 'We ask You for your satisfaction.' He will say, Exalted be He, 'My satisfaction has given you residence in the abode of My Nobility.' Then He will do this with the inhabitants of every level until He reaches His sitting place."

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[169] It is mentioned in Ibn Qutayba's *Ta'wīl Mukhtalaf al-Ḥadīth* during the discussion of the 'drawing near' and the 'fast walking,' that: "We say, 'Verily this is a depiction and a metaphor. He only meant whoever comes to Me quickly, I will bring him the reward faster than he came.'"

[170] 'Ajlūnī confirmed this ḥadīth in *Kashf al-Khafā wa Muzīl al-Ilbās*. He said, "Aḥmad related it from Abū Rayhāna, and Muslim and Tirmidhī related it from Ibn Mas'ūd. Abū Ya'lā and Bayhaqī related it from Abū Sa'īd, and Tabarānī related it from Abū Umāma, Ibn 'Umar, and Jābir, and ibn 'Adī related it from Ibn 'Umar."

This is a ḥadīth concocted against 'Umar, and furthermore, how can he affirm an attribute for God, Exalted be He, by the statement of 'Umar? Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "His saying, Exalted be He: *God comes to them in the shadows of the clouds* (Qur'ān 2: 210) testifies for the ḥadīth of 'Umar." But he did not realize that the meaning is "God will come to them *in* the shadows of clouds."

The Thirty-Ninth Ḥadīth

It was related that 'Ā'isha, may God be pleased with her, said, "The Messenger of God ﷺ was asked about the praiseworthy station. He said, 'My Lord, Mighty and Majestic, has promised me to sit me on the Throne.'"

This ḥadīth is not soundly established on the authority of the Messenger of God ﷺ. Despite this, Ibn Hāmid said, "It is compulsory to believe in the physical contact that has been mentioned about it and the close proximity from The One True God—Exalted be He—of His Prophet ﷺ when He seats him on the Throne." He [also] said, "And Ibn 'Umar recited: *Verily he will have with Us closeness'* (Qur'ān 38:25). Ibn Hāmid then said, "God mentioned that he will be so close to Him that he will touch part of Him." But this is a lie against Ibn 'Umar, and whoever believes in the division of the Divine Essence has become an unbeliever according to the consensus.

The Fortieth Ḥadīth

Dāraqutnī related from the ḥadīth of Abū Ishāq from 'Abd Allāh ibn Khalīfa from 'Umar, may God be pleased with him, that a woman came to the Messenger of God ﷺ and said, "Call on God, Exalted be He, that He will admit me into Paradise." So he extolled the greatness of God, Mighty and Majestic, and then said, "Verily His seat encompasses the Heavens and Earth, and verily, it has a creaking similar to that of the new saddle when He mounts because of His weightiness."

This ḥadīth varies a great deal in other narrations. Abū Ishāq related it from Ibn Khalīfa from Ibn 'Umar. He (Ibn 'Umar) said, "When He sits on the chair (*kursī*), Blessed and Exalted be He, a creaking is heard from it like that of the saddle." Ibn Jarīr related that 'Abd Allāh ibn Khalīfa said, "The Messenger of God ﷺ said, 'Verily His chair encompasses the Heavens and Earth, and verily, He sits on it. So what additional space is left of it is the measure of four fingers.'" Then he (the Prophet) said, "[...] according to the measurement of His finger." And, it appeared that he put together his fingers [to illustrate that measurement]. He then said "Verily the chair has a crackling like that of the saddle, when God mounts it because of His weightiness."

This last version is contrary to the first version,[171] and this is because of the transmitter's own confusion and bad memory.

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[171] Translator: What the author means here by the last version being contrary to the first version is a reference to the *isnād* (chain of transmission), not the text of the ḥadīth. The first ḥadīth is related by Abū Ishāq from 'Abd Allāh ibn Khalīfa from 'Umar from the Prophet ﷺ whereas the last version is related from 'Abd Allāh ibn Khalīfa directly from the Prophet ﷺ. 'Abd Allāh ibn Khalīfa was a successor who never met the Prophet ﷺ. As for the other version of the ḥadīth, Ibn Khalīfa relates it from Ibn 'Umar, instead of 'Umar, may God be pleased with both of them.

The more fitting interpretation is, "So not even the measure of four fingers of additional space remains." The meaning is that He has filled it with His Awesomeness and Greatness.

This happens to be the coining of a similitude about the scope of the Creator's greatness, Splendid is His Majesty. The saying of the transmitters, "When He sits down" and "When He sits up" is the result of their own tampering [with the words of the reports] and from expressing what they believe to be the case, just as those who said about [God's saying]: *Then He became established on the Throne* (Qur'ān 7: 54) [to be] "He sat" [on the Throne]. We objected to this, because it is not permissible with respect to the Creator, Exalted be He, that God be characterized as sitting to the point that that particular object is in excess, since that is one of the qualities of composite bodies.

The Forty-First Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that Abu Sa'īd narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "God, Mighty and Majestic, will say on the Day of Resurrection, 'O Adam!' He will say, 'At your service and disposal!' Then a voice will call out, 'Verily God, Exalted be He, orders you to bring forward from your progeny a deployment to the Fire.'"

Hafs ibn Ġhayyāth was the only narrator to mention the word "voice," and Wakī', Jarīr, and others contradicted him. They did not mention "the voice." And Imām Aḥmad was asked about Hafs and he said, "He used to mix up his ḥadīths." In a sound ḥadīth it states, "Whenever God speaks of revelation, the inhabitants of Heaven hear something like the dragging of a chain on *Safā*." And in the ḥadīth of Ibn Mas'ūd it states, "Whenever God speaks of revelation, the inhabitants of Heaven hear a clattering like the dragging of a chain on *Safā*." There does not exist in the sound narrations, "The inhabitants of Heaven hear a voice."

The Forty-Second Ḥadīth

Jābir related about the Prophet ﷺ that when God spoke to Moses the day on the mount, He addressed him with a different type of speech by which He spoke to him on the day that He summoned him. Then He said to him, "O Moses! Verily I spoke to you with the strength of ten thousand tongues. And I possess the strength of all tongues. And I am even stronger than that." So when he returned to the Children of Israel they said, "Describe to us the speech of the All-Merciful One." He said, "I cannot." They said, "Then make an approximation for us." Moses said, "Have you not witnessed the sound of thunderbolts that draw near with the sweetest speech that you have ever heard?"

This ḥadīth is not soundly established. ‘Alī ibn ‘Āsim relates it from al-Fadl ibn ‘Īsā. Nasā’ī said, "‘Alī ibn ‘Āsim is relinquished in ḥadīth," and Yazīd ibn Hārūn said, "We know him to be a liar."

The Forty-Third Ḥadīth

Qādī [Abū Ya‘lā] related from Hassān ibn ‘Atiyya that he said, "The prostrating person prostrates on the foot of the All-Merciful One."

This is the statement of a disciple of one of the Prophet's companions, and it is a similitude indicative of "The closeness the one has to God's grace, Exalted be He." But Qādī [Abū Ya‘lā] affirmed the attribute of "a foot" by this, and that he literally prostrates on His foot, but without making contact.

The Forty-Fourth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that Abū Mūsā narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "There are two gardens. Its containers and all therein are made of silver. And there is nothing between the people and seeing their Lord except the cloak of pride on His face in the Garden of Eden."

The onlooker is in a Garden of Eden, not the one seen, because places do not encompass Him. But Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "The apparent meaning of the ḥadīth is that the one seen is in a garden of eternal abode." This is clear anthropomorphism!

The cloak of pride is what God possesses of Pride and Greatness. It is as if God denied those in the Garden [from seeing Him] due to His greatness, but, if He wanted, He would unveil Himself for them. We have already discussed the "face" in the verses. There, we mentioned that the intent is "Him" (the face means "Him").

The Forty-Fifth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥī ḥs* that Abū Hurayra narrated that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "When God, Exalted be He, completed the creation He wrote in His book that is with Him[172] above the Throne, 'Verily My Mercy has conquered My Wrath.'" And in one version it states, "My Mercy has surpassed My Wrath."

Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "The outward meaning of his saying, 'with Him,' is indicative of 'closeness to the divine essence.'" But know that closeness to The One True God, Exalted be He, is not determined by distance. That is one of the special qualities of composite bodies. And He, Exalted be He, has said about the punishment sent to Lot's people that it is: *[...] marked with your Lord [...]'* (Qur'ān 51:34).

The Forty-Sixth Ḥadīth

It was related that one of the disciples of the Prophet's companions said, "God created Adam with His hand. He wrote the Torah with His hand. And He planted [the seeds of the garden of] *Firdaws* with His hand."

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[172] The Most Erudite 'Aynī said in *Sharh Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, "The witness does not denote place, rather, it is an allusion to His perfect state in that He is concealed from the creation, elevated beyond the sphere of their comprehension."

This [ḥadīth] has not been confirmed on the authority of the one who said it, and we have already discussed His saying, Exalted in Highness: *[...] to what I created with My hands* (Qur'ān 38: 75).

The Forty-Seventh Ḥadīth

Ibn 'Abbās related narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said regarding His saying, Exalted in Highness: *His chair (Kursī) encompasses the Heavens and Earth* (Qur'ān 2: 255) that, "His *Kursī* is the place of His feet. As for the *'Arsh*, its scope cannot be estimated."

A group of reliable transmitters related it, and designated it to Ibn 'Abbās. One of the transmitters, Shujā' ibn Makhlad,[173] elevated it [to the Prophet]. Because of his opposition to the distinguished masters [in this matter] he is known to be mistaken.

The meaning of the ḥadīth is that the *Kursī* is small with respect to the *'Arsh* like the measure of a foot rest, which has been placed for the feet of the one sitting on the throne with respect to a throne. Dahhāk said, "The *Kursī* is that which kings place their feet upon." But, Qādī [Abū Ya'lā] said, "The foot is the foot of the Divine Essence. And it is that which He will place in the Fire."

The Forty-Eighth Ḥadīth

'Abbās narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Above the seventh Heaven is a sea. What is between its top and its bottom is the like of what is between Heaven and Earth, and God, Exalted be He, is above that."

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[173] Hāfiz ibn Hajar says in *Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb*, "Shujā' ibn Makhlad al-Fallās Abū al-Fadl al-Baghawī the guest of Baghdad is veracious. He made a miscalculation in one ḥadīth. He attributed it to the Messenger while it was designated to a particular companion. So 'Aqīlī mentioned him in *al-Du'afā* for that."

This ḥadīth is not soundly established. Yahyā ibn al-ʻAlā was the only one to report it. Imām Aḥmad said, "He is a liar. He fabricates ḥadīths." And we have already spoken about "the overness" in His Words, Exalted be He: *And He is the Irresistible One, over His servants* (Qur'ān 6: 18). But, Qādī [Abū Yaʻlā] said, "The meaning intended by being 'over' is that the Divine Essence (of God) is mounted on the Throne." As for this comment, its foundation is the belief that God is corporeal!

The Forty-Ninth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥī ḥs* that Abū Hurayra narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever gives charity the equivalent of a date from a wholesome earning—and God only accepts the wholesome—God will accept it with His right hand. Then He will make it grow for its proprietor just as one of you makes his colt grow, until it becomes like the mountain." And in a wording reported by Muslim [it says], "Then it will grow in the palm of the All-Merciful One until it is huger than the mountain."

The scholars have said, "This is an address to people according to what they recognise and understand from the words 'acceptance, breeding, and growth.' And since 'taking' happens through the hand and 'grasping' happens with the palm, he addressed them with what they would comprehend. So mention of the right hand occurred merely because it has been designated to perform monumental tasks. And the meaning of 'breeding' is 'multiplication.'"

The Fiftieth Ḥadīth

Bukhārī and Muslim related in the two *Ṣaḥī ḥs* from the ḥadīth of Anas ibn Mālik about the Prophet ﷺ that the Anti-Christ was mentioned. So he said: "Verily he is one-eyed. And verily your Lord is not one-eyed."[174]

The scholars have said, "He merely meant to manifest the truth about his description in that imperfection is not possible in His regard. He did not intend to affirm a limb, because there is no point of praise in affirming a limb. Rather it is as if he said, 'Verily your Lord is not a possessor of limbs of which imperfections befall.'"

This is also a similitude for the purpose of negating a child from Him, since division is impossible with respect to Him. And if the statement were referring to "a perfect form," there would be no proof of divinity in either that, or in the foot, since the "perfect in form" are many. Thus if someone were to hold this position on God possessing a form, He would have an equal.

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[174] The wording of the ḥadīth in *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī is, "Verily God is not one-eyed," and he pointed with his hand to his eye, saying: "And verily the *Dajjāl* (Anti-Christ) is blind in the right eye." Hāfiz ibn Hajar said, "Verily pointing to his eye, God bless and grant him peace, is merely a reference to the eye of the *Dajjāl*. 'For verily it used to be healthy like this one, then blindness befell it due to his excessive lying about the claim of divinity.' So he used to have a healthy eye like this one. Then imperfection befell it, and he was not able to repel that from himself." Al-Fakhr Rāzī said in *Asās al-Taqdīs*, in relation to this ḥadīth: "And as for this report, it is problematic, because its apparent meaning necessitates that the Prophet ﷺ manifested the difference between God, Exalted in Highness, and the *Dajjāl* by way of the *Dajjāl* being one-eyed and God not being one-eyed. But that is far-fetched, and whenever the non-concurrent report reaches this level of weakness in meaning, it is obligatory to believe that the statement was preceded by an introduction that if it were mentioned, the confusion would disappear. Isn't the narrator of this ḥadīth Ibn 'Umar? And, what is well known is that when Ibn 'Umar mentioned the ḥadīth, "Verily the deceased is punished by the crying of his family," 'Āisha, may God be pleased with her, scolded him, and mentioned that this statement from the Messenger was preceded by another statement. She used as an argument for that His saying, Exalted in Highness: *And the bearer of a burden will not bear the burden of another* (Qur'ān 53: 38) If this had been related, the problem would have disappeared. So likewise, here, it is of a remote likelihood that the like of this statement would issue from the Messenger."

The Fifty-First Ḥadīth

Bukhārī related in his *Afrād* that Abū Hurayra narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily God, Exalted in Highness, said: 'My servant continues to draw near to Me with voluntary acts until I love him. Then when I love him, I am his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he strikes, and his foot by which he walks. And I am not reluctant about anything that I do as much as I am about [taking] the soul of the believer. He hates death. And I hate to disappoint him.'"

As for His saying, "I am his hearing and his seeing," it is a metaphor. It has four different renderings, the first of them being, "I am like his hearing and seeing. So he loves obeying me just as much as he loves these limbs."

The second is that, "His entire being is preoccupied with Me. So he does not pay attention to what displeases Me. And he only looks at what I command him to.'

The third is that, "I obtain for him his objectives just as he obtains them by his hearing, vision, and hand which aid him." As for the "lack of resolve," it is an address made to us according to what we comprehend.

The Fifty-Second Ḥadīth

Jubayr ibn Mut'im related that, "A Bedouin came to the Messenger of God ﷺ and said, 'O Messenger of God! The people are exhausted, the dependants are hungry, the wealth has been ravished, and the cattle have died. So request rain from God for us. Then I will seek intercession through God to you." So the Messenger of God ﷺ said, 'Woe to you! Do you know what you are saying?' So the Messenger of God glorified God and he did not stop glorifying Him until his companions recognised that [discontent] in his face. God's prestige is greater than that. Woe to you! Do you know what God is? Verily His Throne is over His

Heavens like this,' and he made his fingers into the shape of a dome. [He continued and said] 'Verily it creaks because of Him as the saddle does from the one mounting it.'"

And the meaning of his saying, "Do you know what God is?" is, "Do you know what God's Greatness and Majesty are?" And the meaning of, "It creaks because of Him" is that "it is incompacitated by His Greatness and Majesty," since it is known that the saddle creaks from the one who mounts merely because of the strength of what is over it and its inability to bear it.

So he brought the understanding closer to the comprehension from himself with this type of similitude with what means "God's Greatness" and "His Majesty" so that it would be known that the one characterized by Highness in stature cannot be made an intercessor to he who is below him in rank. And we already mentioned in what has passed from Qādī [Abū Yaʿlā] when he stated, "It creaks because of the weightiness of the Divine Essence." And this is clear anthropomorphism!

The Fifty-Third Ḥadīth

Abū Hurayra related that, "The Prophet ﷺ once recited: *Verily God is always All-Hearing, All-Seeing* (Qur'ān 4: 58) and then he placed his finger and thumb over his eyes and ears."

The scholars have said, "He meant by this gesture to indicate the factual existence of the hearing and sight that belong to God. So he pointed to the two parts of the body that are the faculties of hearing and vision, not to that God, Glorified and Exalted is He, has a limb."

The Fifty-Fourth Ḥadīth

Abū al-Dardā related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily God, Mighty and Majestic, descends during the last three hours that remain of the night. So He opens the *Dhikr* (another name for the Preserved Tablet [*al-Lawh al-Mahfūz*]) in the first hour, and erases what He pleases and establishes [what He pleases]. Then He descends in the second hour to the Garden of Eden. In it is His abode in which none but He resides, and it is His habitat. Then He says, 'Blessings for he who enters it.' Then He descends in the third hour to the sky of the ephemeral world along with His spirit and His angels. Then He says, 'By my might!'"

Ziyāda ibn Muḥammad al-Ansārī relates this ḥadīth. Bukhārī said, "He is rejected in ḥadīth." Abū Hātim ibn Hibbān said, "He reports objectionable narrations from notable transmitters, so he deserves to be left alone." We say, while presuming the soundness [of the ḥadīth], it is used in the possessive form to indicate His ownership of it (the habitat) in the same way that the word house in the "House of God" was used to indicate His ownership of it. So this is His house and that is His habitat. We only said this because "the habitat" is impossible with respect to Him, Glorified and Exalted be He.

The Fifty-Fifth Ḥadīth

Abū Umāma related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "My Lord has promised me that seventy-thousand and three handfuls of my nation will enter Paradise."

The handful (*Hathya*) is the measure of a full hand, and the intent from mentioning it is to bring the meaning close to our minds through what we comprehend, not the literal meaning of *Hathya*.

The Fifty-Sixth Ḥadīth

Abū Umāma related that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Verily God will sit on the Day of Resurrection on the bridge between Heaven and Hell."

ʿUthmān ibn ʿĀtika relates it. It has been reported on the authority of Yahyā [that he said], "He (ʿUthman) is insignifant."

The Fifty-Seventh Ḥadīth

Qādī [Abū Yaʿlā] related about Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb, that he said, "When the people used to hear the Qur'ān from the mouth of the All-Merciful One they had never heard it before then."

Qādī [Abū Yaʿlā] said, "It is permissible for the 'mouth' to be applied to Him." This is absolutely unbelievable! "Fī al-Rahmān" literally means, "His mouth!" so he affirms an attribute for God, Exalted be He, with the statement of a disciple of one of the Prophet's companions, even though the narration has not been confirmed on his authority! This is one of the most disparaging things!

As for the ḥadīth that has passed on the authority of Abū Umāma about the Messenger of God ﷺ who said, "The servants do not draw near to me with anything like what has come out of Me," it means, "What appeared from Him." It is not permissible to believe that it is like the exiting of one physical object from another object.

The Fifty-Eighth Ḥadīth

It has been related to us on the authority of Sahl ibn Saʿd that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Below God, Exalted be He, are seventy-thousand veils of light and darkness. And no soul hears anything about the beauty of those veils except that it will die."

This ḥadīth has no source.[175]

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[175] Translator: In other words, it is not found in any of the well-known ḥadīth collections.

The Fifty-Ninth Ḥadīth

Anas related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily God, Exalted be He, has a Tablet. On one side is a pearl and the other side is a sapphire. Its [or His] pen is light. In it [is written] 'He creates [such and such], and with it [it is written] 'He provides' [such and such], and with it [it is written] He gives life [to so and so] and with it [it is written] 'He brings death, and He gives might [to so and so] and 'He debases' [so and so], and 'He does what He pleases' [to such and such and so and so] on a [particular] day and night."

This is a spurious ḥadīth. Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān relates it, and he is renounced in ḥadīth.

The Sixtieth Ḥadīth

Jābir related that the Prophet ﷺ said, "When you see the wind do not revile it, for verily it is from the breath of the All-Merciful One. It brings mercy and it brings punishment. So ask God for the good of it, and seek refuge with God from its evil."

The "breath" (*nafas*) means, "Removing worry from the distressed."[176] And like it is what Abū Hurayra related about the Messenger of God ﷺ who said, "Verily I feel the breath of your Lord from the direction of Yemen." He means, "His relief from distress through the People of Medina's support of me." And Medina is from the direction of Yemen, and this is something that the Muslims do not differ about.

But, Ibn Hāmid said, "I found some of our comrades affirming a characteristic for God in His essence that He breathes." He said, "And they said, 'The winds that blow like the gale, the barren wind, the south wind, the north wind, the east wind, and the west wind are all created except for a wind that is amongst His attributes. It possesses an imaginary breeze, and it is from the breath of the All-Merciful One.'"

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[176] Zamakhsharī says in *Asās al-Balāgha*, "And [when it is said] 'I don't have a breath' it means 'a relief.'" Ibn Qutayba said: "And God relieved His Prophet ﷺ from distress through the wind on the Day of the Confederates. He says, Exalted in Highness: *So We sent against them a wind and forces they didn't see* (Qur'ān 33:9)."

May God damn the one who believes this, because he affirms a created body for the Lord! Those who believe this are not Muslims!

I would also like to make mention that when a group of the fools gained knowledge of this book of mine it did not please them, since they were familiar with the words of their leaders who compare God with His Creation. They attempted to defend themselves by saying, "This [does not represent] the *madhhab* [of Aḥmad ibn al- Ḥanbal]."[177]

Indeed, it is not your *madhhab*, nor the *madhhab* of your shaykhs you have emulated. I have cleared any charges against the *madhhab* of Imām Aḥmad and from him the false narrations and the raving statements while not opting *taqlīd* (the following of qualified scholarship without knowing the evidences) in what I believe. How could I not discard of counterfeit money while I am paying [real] cash?[178]

I would like to leave you with the following poem: "I have surpassed, while praising God, those who were before me/So say to he who hopes to catch me, Take your time!/If you had lessened your criticism/ It would be hard after searching to find one quite like me.

I then say to you an elongated *Qasida* (tripartite poem). It states the following:

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[177] Translator: This would indicate that this version is a shorter version written by Ibn al-Jawzī after *Kitāb Akhbār al-Sifāt* which is the version translated by Swartz.

[178] Translator: In other words, he is saying: *Taqlīd* in matters of creed is counterfeit money, and evidence is the real cash. In the publication in my possession, what I have translated as, "And how could I not discard of conterfeit money while I'm paying [real] cash?" to read "and how could I discard of conterfeit money while I'm paying in [real] cash?" I believe that it is a mistake on part of the publisher whereas it appears that he has omitted the word 'لا' indicative of the negative.

I have praised my God. And how not when He has the grace?
For He has befriended Me and the paths have become tractable for me.

He brought me forth from my family while endowed with understanding
And taught me knowledge by which my value is made priceless.

He motivated me towards the noble traits that I possess
So my soul's fervor forever and ever increases.

He inspired me to acquire knowledge until I possessed it
Then the bitterness of perseverance became sweet in my mouth.

And He increased my passion for the sciences,
and then they became
Like the statue of Layla with respect to Qays so that he wouldn't forget.

And of all the disciplines that God has scattered about amongst mortals
To His creatures there is not one except that I have with them some sort of connection.

I have written what other people have written the like of
So, O seekers of justice, to me
Give distinction and test me!

And of intuitive statements I have marvels
That jump back at them, and the longer they are the sweeter.

My knowledge steered me to abstinence regarding the lowlier things

And these two characteristics are only combined in a servant
who possesses virtue.

Yes! And the fear of God is the most honorable friendship
And there is no good in a statement when action is wasted.

My satisfaction with what suffices me is my certainty
From being afflicted with injury
And after me having certainty about the things that have
been measured out,
There is no humiliation.

So be good to a knowledge that has flung its proprietor
Into the falsehood of a creature with whom ignorance is
equated.

And He made my heart a place for the love of every
champion of truth
I loved passionately just as eyes can passionately love
offspring.

Baghdad is an abode in which its people are not duped
And their love is only for he who has prestige.

And in all of the lands, my virtues have freighted them
The devout, the rugged, [and] the soft have all acknowledged
my excellence.

My mention with virtue beyond the River is abundant
And in the Far West and wherever camels have reached.

And when I looked at all of the madhhabs
Pursued the straightest in correctness and what they lauded.

So I found, after probing, that the view of Ibn Ḥanbal
Surpasses all of the madhhabs. Rather it towers over them.

Everything that he said is supported
By a sound tradition. And ḥadīth is the foundation.

He was, regarding the transmission of knowledge, the most knowledgeable of those who transmitted
He delivers the news even if an obscurity marrs it.

And his madhhab is not to equate anything with his Lord
And he follows in submission those who passed before.

So the envious one from every part stood up against him
Then he stood up on the foot of firmness while they slipped.

And he had true followers coming successively
O the many they gave direction towards guidance and to you they showed the way!

Then a group of people came claiming the adoption of a madhhab
In accord with his madhhab.

Not every branch has a root.

So not in the branches of Fiqh do they stand firm in his support
And they have beyond what he said a preoccupation.

When they debate they take the stance of a warrior
What astonishment when all of the people are unarmed!

Their analogising is irregular whenever they proceed with it
And they are in the sciences of transmission lacking.

If there isn't one possessing intelligence regarding transmitted knowledge
Vipers resemble one another. So the robe is severed.

And they inclined towards anthropomorphism while
adopting the apparent form of
That which they transmitted regarding the attributes and
they were heedless.

And they said, "What we say is the madhhab of Aḥmad"
And those possessing ignorance inclined to giving them
credence.

The opponents started saying that we were
Those who compared God with His Creation.

The comrades and friends have hurt us.

They have disgraced that Imām by way of their ignorance
While his madhhab is exoneration.

But they are loners.

By my life! I have met true scholars from their midst
While most of those I met lack intelligence.

I continue to clean away from them every property
Of the despicable creed so that unity can be achieved.

They were designated with titles while they have no
knowledge Their morals have neither sacred precincts nor
free districts.

On their tables the vinegar doesn't join with its herbs
And if you will, 'There's neither vineger nor herbs on them.'

And the most envious of us are the people of my madhhab
So if they were able they'd pass a verdict that my blood is
lawful.

They wish out of ignorance that my sandal would slip

While not one foot of theirs has walked before in glory like
me.

And since the Shaykh of the party, Aḥmad, has passed away
Until now there hasn't existed an equal to your scholar.

A thousand thousands (one million) have spent the night
with me standing
The clouds of my exhortation, each of them is a storm cloud
and moisture.

And all the gardens of my knowledge exult the fruits
And their garden, when you observe it, is strengthened.

So what do you think is the cure for the envious and his
sickness? If the experienced doctor is asked about him he
forgets him?

An opponent is alone in his disgusting hatred
Is not the people's uniting behind me a just witness?

* * *

"The Attributes of God" is complete. In the last lesson of "The Negation of Anthropomorphism" of the Dictations of Hāfiz Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī ibn al-Hassan ibn Hibat Allāh al-Shāfi'ī, I say, "Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Hassan ibn Mansūr al-Mu'ammil linafsihī sung to us:

God is greater than for there to be for His essence
A description like the essences of His creatures.

Or for His attributes to be equated, in all of what
We manifest from our actions, to His attributes.

Be there Destruction for the possessor of folly who
says that He is

A composite body and that our characteristics are like
His characteristics!

The uniqueness of His fashioning, to Him, are witnesses

That appear on the surface of all that He made.

He dispersed the human race with an eternal power
And He willed it in them for His decrees.

And He saw with the eye of knowledge what would bring
The glances of their eyes as well as what they would not bring.

APPENDIX I

Kitāb al-Ibāna: A Case Study

Many followers of Imām Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī, may God show him mercy, believe his *Kitāb al-Luma'* to be the last book that he wrote. There is disagreement amongst them however, as to whether *Kitāb al-Ibāna 'an Usūl al-Diyāna* happens to be one of his works or not. Many of them—like Ibn Asākir—acknowledge it as being one of his works. As for others, they reject the idea of having such a book ascribed to him due to the anthropomorphic statements and leanings found in it. This faction believes that *Kitāb al-Ibāna* was contrived by some of the late Hanbalīs as an attempt to make it appear that Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī held similar views as they did, which were often anthropomorphic in nature. If none of the Ash'arīs even suggest that *Kitāb al-Ibāna* was the final work of al-Ash'arī, others of a different vein would disagree. Those scholars who appeared later in Islamic history would like everyone to believe that *Kitāb al-Ibāna* was the last of al-Ash'arī's works and which constituted his *madhhab* in its final form upon which he died. Perhaps the first to promulgate this view is Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya. He says about the followers of al-Ash'arī:

> As for those of them who state what is in *Kitāb al-Ibāna* that al-Ash'arī composed at the end of his life—and there does not exist any statement that contradicts that, such a person is considered one of the People of the *Sunna*. However,

merely ascribing oneself to al-Ash'arī is an innovation.[179]

Ibn Taymiyya divides al-Ash'arī's journey to the truth into three phases:

1. The *Mu'tazilite* Phase: This represents the phase of al-Ash'arī's life from birth until he abandoned the *Mu'tazilite* doctrine around the age of 40.
2. The phase between *Mu'tazilite* Thought and finding the *Sunna*: During this phase, he followed the rational approach similar to that of Abū Muḥammad Abdullāh ibn Sa'īd ibn Kilāb.
3. The *Sunni* Phase: That is, he adopted the Ḥanbalī approach in *'aqīda* as he acknowledged in *Kitāb al-Ibāna*.[180]

Ibn Taymiyya's only basis for determining a third phase for al-Ash'arī's development is his assumption that *Kitāb al-Ibāna* was his final work. There is very little or no historical evidence to support this division even though he claims, "there does not exist any statement that contradicts that." No one before Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728) is known to have ever held such a view. Despite this, Orientalists like Goldziher[181] have drawn the same conclusion and a number of people today have "blindly" accepted Ibn Taymiyya's view without any substantial research. Mu ḥammad ibn Sali ḥ al-' Uthaymīn says:

> And al-Ash'arī Abu al-Hasan was—at the end of his life—upon the *madhhab* of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al- Ḥadīth*. And it is to establish what God established to His self in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger, God bless and grant

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[179] *Majmū'a al-Fatāwā*: 6/359. Ascribing oneself to the *Salaf* is also an innovation.

[180] See *Majmū'a al-Fatāwā*: 4/71 and 5/556.

[181] Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921) has had an enormous influence in the field of Islamic studies and practically everything he wrote between 1870 and 1920 is still studied in universities throughout the world. His *Muhammedanische Studien* published in 1890, is arguably the most influential study on ḥadīth in European scholarship, where he argued that a considerable amount of the ḥadīth literature was fabricated.

> him peace, without distortion (*tahrīf*), or negation (*ta'tīl*) [of God's attributes], or asking how (*takyīf*), or drawing a similitude (*tamthīl*) [between the Creator and creation]. And the *madhhab* of a man is whatever he says last when he states clearly that his opinion is restricted to it as is the situation with Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'arī as is known from his statement in *al-Ibāna*. So according to this, imitating him completely is to follow what he was upon lastly. And it is to adhere to the *madhhab* of *Ahl al- Ḥadīth wa al-Sunna*, since it is the correct *madhhab* that is compulsory to follow of which Abū al-Hasan, his self, adhered to. [182]

When Shaykh 'Uthaymīn makes reference to the *madhhab* of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al- Ḥadīth*, it is actually a reference to the *madhhab* some of the Ḥanbalīs of the past, some of whom had anthropomorphic leanings, and had always been intolerant of those who reject their particular approach while always claiming to represent the *Ahl al-Sunna*. Modern-day cries of such people to return to the methodology (*Minhāj*) of the *Salaf* is no more than the revival of the old intolerant tendencies of such Ḥanbalīs to put down anyone who has a different view from themselves. So to argue that imitating him completely is to follow what he was upon towards the end of his life, would be in clear contradiction to what 'Uthaymīn states elsewhere when he declares:

> [...] Truth is not weighed by men. Rather, men are weighed by the truth. This is the proper criterion even though there is in the status of men and their ranks an affect in the acceptance of their views, just as we accept the report of the trustworthy person and we pause with regard to the report of the shameless sinner (*fāsiq*). However, it isn't the criterion in every case [...]"[183]

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[182] 'Uthaymin, Mu ḥammad Sali ḥ, *Al-Qawā`id al-Muthlā fi Sifat Allāh wa Asma'ihi al-Husna; Idarat al-Buhuth al-'Ilmiyya wa al-Ifta wa Al-Da'wa wa al-Irshad bi Kulliyat al-Shari'a fi al-Qasim. 5/11/1404 AH p. 85.*

[183] *Ibid*, pp. 86.

It would therefore be pointless to make such an argument, and to think that it stands as a proof against the Ash'arīs. So it is as if it is no argument at all. Shaykh `Abdullāh ibn `Abd al-Rahmān al-Jibrīn says:

> The leadership of Imām Shāfi'ī is well-acknowledged. He has a [High] status in the Umma, and he is the scholar of Quraysh. God gave favor to him and provided him with understanding, comprehension, status, and good repute amongst the Umma. And groups of people have adopted his *madhhab* and followed his approach in the branches [of Fiqh]. However—unfortunately—a number of them opposed him in the fundamentals (*'aqīda*), so they preferred over him Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'arī, even though al-Ash'arī also took back what he said.[184]

In addition to that, the logic of al-Jibrīn necessitates that if someone does *taqlīd* of another in *Fiqh* they must also do *taqlīd* of them in *'aqīda,* but this is incorrect. Actually, *taqlīd* in *'aqīda* is impermissible according to the overwhelming majority of scholars. As for many Ḥanbalis, they consider it permissible to do *taqlīd* in *'aqīda.* So again, we see the revival of an ancient tendency of some scholars championing of only the views of Imām Aḥmad or what they believed to be his views, and considering it the indisputable truth to the point that they would pronounce deviance upon anyone who differed with them.

Dr. Hamūda Ġhurāba[185] says while commenting on whether the style used by al-Ash'arī in his *Kitāb al-Luma'* is similar to the style of *Kitāb al-Ibāna*:

> McDonald W.,[186] as well as the *Salafiyya* believes the two

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[184] *Shar ḥ Lum'a al-'Itiqād,* p.89.

[185] Dr. Hamūda Ġhurāba wrote the introduction to al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li al-Turāth's publication of al-Ash'arī's *Kitāb al-Luma'*.

[186] I wasn't able to make out the last name of this figure. In Arabic it is written as وزقن. I'm uncertain of the proper transliteration, so I just left it as McDonald W.

styles to be clearly different. Despite that, they believe that the phase of *al-Ibāna* is the final phase of which the opinion of al-Ash'arī settled upon—and Goldziher also agrees with that—even though McDonald and the *Salafiyya* differ with regard to the justification for his change from the rational style that *al-Luma'* portrays to the *Salafiyya* style that *al-Ibāna* portrays. McDonald believes that he was compelled to abandon the rational style and to establish the face, the hands, and others after he settled in Baġhdād during the last days of his life and his fall under the influence of the Ḥanbalīs. What that means is that he invented the second style to earn the satisfaction of the Ḥanbalīs. And he did perhaps to ward off their evil too. So the matter is not one of *'aqīda*. Rather, it is a matter of conforming to circumstances and observing what they require. And perhaps what bears witness to that is the statement of some of them that: "The Ash'arīs attributed *al-Ibāna* to the Ḥanbalīs as a shield." However, this explanation does not please the *Salafiyya* chiefs. Rather, they say: "Al-Ash'arī arrived to the truth in phases. First, he abandoned the *madhhab* of the *Mu'tazila* to his rational *madhhab*. So he attained half of the truth. Then he finally left his rational *madhhab* to the *madhhab* of the *Salaf*. So he attained the truth fully, and then he died well-pleased with." And this is a view that appears to be acceptable. But it will remain a hypothesis until it finds the decisive evidence that supports it. On the other hand, I believe that there is another hypothesis that is more worthy of claiming and closer to acceptance. It is that the *Salafiyya* style that *al-Ibāna* portrays issued first, and that the rational style that *al-Luma'* portrays issued last and that it set the boundaries for the *madhhab* of al-Ash'arī in its final form upon which its proponent died while adopting it believing its correctness, defending it, and being pleased with it for his followers. And the reasons for preferring this view of mine are many. Some of them are psychological, and others are scientific. And perhaps amongst what originates from

> the psychological reasons is that we see al-Ash`arī in *Kitāb al-Ibāna*, more brilliant in style, more zealous, and pressing more heavily on the *Mu'tazila* and of further remoteness from their views. These are psychological manifestations that a person experiences in his self towards his opinion that he gives up after abandoning it or after relinquishing it. As for the scientific side, it is sufficient for the reader to review a chapter shared between the two books in order to see that *Kitāb al-Luma'* in that [particular] chapter has covered all of its particulars, sufficiently presented its proofs, thoroughly mentioned the objections of his opponents, and refuted them with excellence; something of what indicates that *Kitāb al-Luma'* was only written at the time within which the *madhhab* had matured in the mind of its proponent, and that he only presented it in this book after he had become accustomed to it and it became clear to him. And Wensinck and other researchers share this view with me."[187]

A number of scholars of the past and the present have rejected the idea that *Kitāb al-Ibāna* was written by Shaykh Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī. Amongst them is a contemporary by the name `Īsā ibn `Abd Allāh Māni' Al-Himyarī. This is what he says in his book, *Tashīh al-Mafāhīm*:

> As for *Kitāb al-Ibāna* ascribed to Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī, may God show him mercy, there is debate about that [ascription] for a number of reasons:
>
> First: Ibn Fūrak and others of the companions of Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī did not mention this book as being one of his works. Likewise, the rest of his pupils have not mentioned it to our knowledge;
>
> Second: There is much discrepancy between the [different] copies and there is conflict in their texts; something that

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[187] Introduction to *Kitāb al-Luma'*, pp. 7-8. Tab'a Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li al-Turāth.

> confirms the Hashwiyya's[188] meddling with this book;
>
> Third: There are expressions in *Kitāb al-Ibāna* that contradict the apparent meanings of the texts of Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī that he mentions in his other books, especially *Kitāb al-Luma' al-Saghīr* and *al-Kabīr*, which is the last of what he wrote. Likewise, it contains expressions that contradict the words of his pupils and the Imāms of his *madhhab* while they are those who have transmitted the *madhhab* from him;
>
> Fourth: Some of the *Mutamaslifa* ("Salafīs") attempted to attribute the *'aqīda* of anthropomorphism (*tajsīm*) to Imām al-Ash'arī but they were not able to, and I knew that one of the students of an esteemed Islamic university undertook this task but failed.[189]

We can also add the following to what al-Himyarī said:

1. *Kitāb al-Ibāna* does not contain one rebuttal of al-Ash'arī's supposed previously held rational doctrine as claimed by the *Salafīs* and Ḥanbalī dissenters. So if al-Ash'arī had taken back any thing he believed, why is it that we do not find him repudiating any of his prior beliefs? In the Chapter of "The Mention of the Establishment on the Throne," he says: "The Mu'tazila, the Hurūriyya,[190] the Jahmiyya, and others claimed that God, Mighty and Majestic, is in every place."[191] So here he undertakes the refutation of the aforementioned factions in their belief that God is everywhere, and then he declares that

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[188] Hashawī is a term applied to those who say things like God has a real hand, face, eyes, etc, but not like ours. The Hashawiyya are said to be the origin of the Mujassima: those who say God is a body and the Mushabbiha: those who draw a resemblance between the creation and the Creator.

[189] *Tashīh al-Mafāhīm al-'Aqadiyya fī al-Sifāt al-Ilāhiyya* (Dār al-Salām) 1419/1998

[190] This is another name for the Khawārij.

[191] *Al-Ibāna*, p. 47.

God is in Heaven.[192] But why does he not refute the statement of the Ash'arīs when they say, "God transcends place." That is, He does not occupy space? If al-Ash'arī in fact wrote *al-Ibāna*, it would definitely have to be his *first* work after relinquishing the doctrine of the Mu'tazila, and *not his last* as claimed by Ibn Taymiyya. If it were his last work it would still leave room to believe that he still acknowledged his rational doctrine to be the truth as maintained by McDonald W.

2. Imām al-Ash'arī did not warn his pupils and followers against reading his supposed earlier works that portray the rational style of polemical theology as he did when he left the Mu'tazila. Ibn Asākir reports him as saying, "And we composed a book about the attributes that we entitled *'al-Jawābāt fī al-Sifāt 'an Masā'ili Ahl Al-Zayġh wa Al-Shubuhāt,'* ("The Answers to the Questions of The People of Deviation and Doubts with regard to the Attributes.") In it we rebutted a book that we composed about them (the attributes) in the past while considering the *madhhab* of the Mu'tazila to be correct. A book has not been composed for them like it. Then God, Glory is His, clarified for us the truth. So we retracted it, and then undid it and clarified its falseness."

Conclusion

Based upon what we have been discussing, we can conclude the following:

1. *Kitāb al-Ibāna ` an Usūl al-Diyāna* was not the last book of al-Ash'arī, that is if we accept it as being one of his works at all.

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[192] In addition, he mentions in *Maqalāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, that the Mu'tazila do not actually believe that God is in essence in every place. They believe that "God's management (*tadbīr*) is every place." So this would give more reason to believe that the book was concocted against al-Ash'arī.

2. If it was one of his works, it was likely to be his first work or one amongst his first, before his *madhhab* took its final form.
3. The claim made by Ibn Taymiyya that it was the last of his works has no strong or valid basis.
4. Even if al-Ash'arī did go through this third phase of his journey towards truth, it would not mean anything, since men are weighed by the truth. The truth doesn't gain its authority from the one who states it.

APPENDIX II

Figurative Language in Islamic Scripture

There has been an attempt in our time by some Muslims to revive the texts of some ancient dissenters who claimed that there are no figurative expressions found in the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Messenger of God ﷺ. The term for figurative speech in the Arabic language, *majāz*, is defined as, "Using the word or expression contrary to what it was originally used for."[193] When a person uses a word that is contrary to its original meaning, he is called a *mu'awwil* and his action is called *ta'wīl*. However, it is not the right of any person to interpret another's words according to a meaning not found in the speaker's own language. Furthermore, according to the universal rules of language, it is not permitted for one to interpret another's words according to a meaning found in the interpreter's language but not found in the language of the one whose words are being interpreted.

To deny the existence of figurative speech in any language is indicative of someone who lacks the understanding of the mechanics of language, as well as a refusal to acknowledge long established realities accepted by all peoples in every age. Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī says:

> There is no difference of opinion about the occurrence of

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[193] One definition given by Imām al-Shawkānī in *Irshād al-Fuhūl* for *ta'wil* is, "The expression used, contrary to what it was firstly designed for, in a manner that is valid." [1/111]

> literal expressions in the Qur'ān. They are any expression that has maintained its original usage without an ancient or more recent change. This is [the case of] most speech. As for *majāz*, the overwhelming majority [of scholars] hold the view that it also occurs in the Qur'ān, even though a group of them denied it—among them are the Ẓāhirīs, Ibn al-Qās of the Shāfi'īs, and Ibn Khuwayz Mindād of the Mālikīs. Their argument is that *majāz* is akin to lying, and the Qur'ān is innocent of it. [They also argue that] the speaker does not employ it until the literal meaning becomes hard to apply, thereby using a metaphor. But that is impossible on God to do—Be He Exalted! And this is an unsupportable argument. Nevertheless, if *majāz* has fallen from the Qur'ān, then half of the beauty would fall from it. The experts of eloquence have all agreed that figurative speech is more eloquent than the literal expression. If it was essential that the Qur'ān be void of figurative speech it would be necessary that it be void of omission, emphasis, the reiteration of narratives, and other things."[194]

Clearly, from al-Suyūtī's words, only a minority of scholars have been identified as denying the occurrence of figurative language in the Qur'ān. Despite their views, most scholars gave very little consideration to them, and how could they when the Qur'ān was revealed in the Arabic language: *Verily, We made it an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may comprehend* (Qur'ān 12: 2). By virtue of it being in Arabic, it must contain both literal and figurative expressions, since the Arabic language contains literal and figurative expressions.

In reality, those who denied the occurrence of figurative speech in the language did so without strong or valid bases. Some of them merely denied that one was able to make reference to God's words as being "figurative language," and not that figurative speech did not occur in the Qur'ān. If every statement in the Qur'ān were to be taken literally, it would be a negation of what God says concerning the Qur'ān, namely that: *From it are verses clear in their indication—they are the foundation of The Book. And others are ambiguous* (Qur'ān 3: 7). This verse explicitly states that allegory and figurative speech exist in the Qur'ān whether you call it *majāz* or *mutashābih*. The only difference is that God alone knows the true interpretation of any ambiguous verse, as He states: *And none know its meaning except God* (Qur'ān 3: 7).

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[194] Ibn Ḥazm states in his *Ihkām al-Ahkām*, "And those who deny figurative language (*majāz*) say: 'Verily, *majāz* is a lie. And God– High is He–and His Messenger–may God bless and grant him peace–are far from speaking falsehood [...]." Ibid. p. 448

While never claiming to know for certain what God's intent is from an ambiguous verse, the scholars who looked into such matters merely attempted to understand and explain what might be possible. It is by their knowledge that they were able to arrive at a speculative conclusion, as God says: *And none know its meaning except God and those deeply rooted in knowledge* (Qur'ān 3: 7).[195] By knowing the possibilities with regard to the interpretation of the ambiguous verses, it can rightfully be said that one knows their meaning in uncertain terms. And God knows best.[196]

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[195] Ibn Kathīr says in his *Tafsīr*, "Muhammad ibn Ishāq ibn Muḥammad ibn Ja'far ibn al-Zubayr said: 'None know its meaning that He meant except God. And those deeply rooted in knowledge say [We believe in it]. Then they refer the meaning of the *mutashābihāt* to what they know about the meaning of those of clear indication, that none can interpret [...].'" Ibn Kathīr further states, "And one of the scholars has chosen to make a distinction, and in this place he said: '*Ta'wīl* is mentioned and two (different) meanings are meant by it in the Qur'ān. One is: *Ta'wīl* that means 'the true nature of a thing and its point of origin.' An example of it is God's saying, High is He: *And he said: O my father! This is the interpretation (ta'wīl) of my vision from before* (Qur'an 12: 10). The same is His saying, High is He: *Do they but wait for its interpretation (ta'wīl) the day that its interpretation comes?* (Qur'an 7: 53). That is, "The true nature of what they spoke of concerning the resurrection. So if this is what is meant by *ta'wīl*, then the stop should be on God, because the reality of all affairs and their true natures, none know it–for a certainty–except God–Mighty and Majestic. So His statement: *And those deeply rooted in knowledge* would be a subject (*mubtada'*), while: *They say: We believe in it* would be its predicate. But if the other meaning is intended by *ta'wīl*, which is *tafsīr* (explanation), *bayān* (clarification), and *ta'bīr 'an al-shay'* (the expression made about a thing), then the stop would be on: *and those deeply rooted in knowledge*, since they know and understand what they are addressed with from this consideration even if they have not fully grasped the realities of things according to the essence of their states [...]." Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Āli 'Imrān* (7: 1/328).

It has been related about Ibn ʿAbbās, may God be pleased with him and his father, that he said:

> Explanation (*tafsīr*) is of four types: An explanation that no one is excused for not understanding; an explanation that the Arabs know from their dialects; an explanation that those deeply rooted in knowledge know, and an explanation that only God knows.

Ibn Kathīr says, "And this statement has also been related from ʿĀisha, ʿUrwa, Abu al-Shaʿthā, Abū Nuhayk, and others." [197] Ibn Kathīr also related the statement ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās, "I am one of those who are deeply rooted in knowledge who know its meaning (the ambiguous)." Similar quotes have been related from Mujāhid, and al-Rabīʿ ibn Anas.

A very prominent expression of figurative speech in the Qur'ān is the verse of fasting wherein God says: *And eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct from the black thread of dawn* (Qur'ān 2: 187). It is related that ʿAdī ibn Hātim would place a black halter and a white halter underneath his pillow before he retired at night. Every time he might awaken, he would check underneath his pillow to see if he could distinguish the black halter from the white one. When he woke up the next day he asked God's Messenger about that, and he said to him, "That is merely the whiteness of the day and the blackness of the night."[198]

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[196] Al-Suyūtī mentioned in his *Itqān* (3/7) about the reading where the stop is made after mentioning [...] *and those deeply rooted in knowledge,* "Ibn Hājib said: 'Verily, it is apparently the correct view (*zahir*). As for the majority of the *Sahaba,* the *Tabi'in,* and their followers (*atbā'uhum*), and those after them–especially *Ahl al-Sunna*–they took the second view (stopping on God's name [...] *except God*). And it is the soundest versions about Ibn ʿAbbās."

[197] This quote as well as the preceding quote of Ibn ʿAbbās is taken from Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qu'rān al-'Azīm*: Āli 'Imrān (3: 7).

[198] Both Bukhārī and Muslim report this ḥadīth.

Examples of figurative speech throughout the Qur'ān are many. In what follows, we attempt to provide a further clarification of the meaning of *majāz*, its different types and some examples of its use in the Qur'ān and Sunna.

TYPES OF *MAJĀZ*: *AL-MAJĀZ AL-'AQLĪ* AND *AL-MAJĀZ AL-LUĠHAWĪ*

The scholars of Arabic eloquence have identified two categories of *majāz*. If the figurative meaning is being expressed through a combination of words in a phrase, it is called *al-majāz al-'aqlī* "the rational metaphor." If it is being expressed as one word, it is called *al-majāz al-luġhawī*, "the linguistic metaphor."

As for the first type of *majāz*, its figurative meaning materializes as a result of the close relationship between the entity characterized by the particular action or description and the true doer of the action, or the thing rightfully deserving that description. An example is God's saying: *And when His signs are recited over them they increase them in faith* (Qur'ān 8: 2). The increase in faith is attributed to God's signs, even though it is God who is the source of the increase in faith. There is an inseparable relationship between the signs and the one who manifests them, and the one who has power to increase faith is the same who has the power to manifest His signs or "the signs of Him." Other examples are His sayings: *He slaughters their sons* (Qur'ān 28: 4); *O Hāmān! Build for me a tower!* (Qur'ān 40: 36), and: *A day that will make children gray-haired* (Qur'ān 73: 17). In the first example, the slaughter of their sons was attributed to Pharaoh, even though his agents carried out the slaughter. Pharaoh has authority to command his agents, and his agents are obliged to obey his command. So it is as if Pharaoh himself committed the slaughter. In the second example, the order to build the tower was given to Hāmān even though his masons were those who fulfilled the order. The relationship between Hāmān and his masons is the same relationship between Pharaoh and his agents. In the last example, the day was considered the cause of turning the children's heads gray, even though it was God who actually did so, and only God truly has the power to alter the states of things.

As for the second type of *majāz*, "The linguistic metaphor," it is defined as, "Using the word or expression contrary to what it was originally used for." It is this type of *majāz* that concerns us most, and it takes many forms:

1. Using the whole of a thing to refer to a part of it, such as God's saying: *They place their fingers in their ears* (Qur'ān 2: 19), while they merely inserted the tips of their fingers. Inserting the entire finger into one's ears is impossible. The wisdom behind mentioning fingers instead of fingertips is to exaggerate the extent of their rejection and flight from truth, so it was as if they put their entire fingers in their ears. Another example of this kind is God's saying: *And when you see them, their exteriors please you* (Qur'ān 63: 4), but what is meant is that, "Their faces please you." Another example is God's saying: *You would have surely been filled with alarm from them* (Qur'ān 18: 18), while it means, "Your heart would have been filled with alarm," since alarm can only take place in the heart. The heart is only one organ of the body while God describes the entire body with the characteristic of part of itself.
2. Using the characteristic of a thing to refer to the totality of it, as in God's saying: *And the countenance of your Lord will remain* (Qur'ān 55: 27), meaning: "And your Lord will remain," since it would mean that all of God's attributes except for His countenance would cease to exist were we to take it literally. Other examples include; *Then turn your faces toward it* (Qur'ān 2: 144) meaning, "Turn your entire person toward

it," since it is only said that one is facing a thing when they do so with their chest and the rest of the body; *Faces that day are joyful* (Qur'ān 88: 8), and: *Faces that day are humiliated, laboring, weary* (Qur'ān 88: 2-3). "Face" here refers to "the entire body," that will express "joy" and "weariness," which are manifested on the entire body and not simply on the face. Further examples of this usage in the Qur'ān include: *That is because of what your hands have set forth* (Qur'ān 22: 10), and: *[...] because of what your hands have earned* (Qur'ān 42: 30), even though deeds are carried out by more than just the hands, God attributes every deed performed with any part of the body to the hands, since most deeds are carried out with the hands. If this was not the understanding, then we would have to accept that we would only be called to account for what we do with our hands, while what we do with our eyes, ears, for example, will not be subject to judgment.

3. Using the specific phrase to refer to the general class. An example of this is God's saying: *Verily, we are the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds* (Qur'ān 26: 16). Here, God commands His Messengers to go to their people, but He tells them to say that they are the "Messenger" as opposed to "Messengers," since both of them come with the same message. It is as if they are one person. God uses the singular noun to refer to the dual. So it is as if He said "1" while meaning "2."
4. Using the general expression to refer to the specific entity. An example of this type of figurative speech is: *And they ask forgiveness for whoever is in Earth* (Qur'ān 42: 5). God says "whoever," but the intent is actually that "they ask forgiveness for whoever is a believer in the Earth." What supports this is God's statement: *And they ask forgiveness for those who believe* (Qur'ān 40: 7). So the general is used to mean the specific.

5. Using the effect to refer to the cause of a thing such as in His saying: *And He sends down from the sky sustenance* (Qur'ān 40: 13). Another example being: *We have sent down upon you garments* (Qur'ān 7: 26). In both these verses, God states that He has sent down "sustenance" and "garments," when in fact He has only sent down rain. Rain is the direct cause and source of sustenance and clothing, since water is necessary for fruits and vegetables to ripen, which in turn are eaten by cattle, whose hides are later taken and used for garments by people. Another example of this type of figurative speech is: *They do not find marriage* (Qur'ān 24: 33), meaning: "They do not find the provisions for a marriage dowry, maintenance, and everything else that a husband is required to have before marrying." So marriage is the effect. The capacity to get married is the cause, and the effect has been used to refer to the cause in the above instance.
6. Using the cause to refer to the effect. An example of this sort of *majāz* is God's saying: *And they were not capable of hearing* (Qur'ān 11: 20) meaning, "They did not accept and comply with the message," since acceptance and compliance result from hearing the message. The inability to hear is the cause, while non-compliance is the effect from that inability. So the cause is used to refer to the effect in this instance.
7. Using the condition or state of something to refer to the place where that state is found. An example of this kind is what God says about those whose faces turn white on the Day of Judgment that they are: [...] *in the mercy of God. They are therein forever abiding* (Qur'ān 3: 107) meaning, "In Paradise," since that is the place where God's mercy is found. So the condition and state of Paradise (mercy) is used to refer to Paradise.

8. Using the place where a condition is found to refer to that condition. An example of this is: *In His hand is all dominion* (Qur'ān 67: 1). Instead of saying, "In His control or possession," He said, "In His hand," since the hand is characterized as having power and is a foundation for control and possession. Thus the hand is used to refer to the condition or characteristics of the hand.
9. Using the "heart" to refer to the "mind" such as in God's saying: *They have hearts whereby they don't comprehend* (Qur'ān 7: 179), that is, "They have minds."[199]
10. Using the "mouth" to refer to the "tongue" such as God's saying: *They say with their mouths* (Qur'ān 3: 167), that is, "They say with their tongues."
11. Using God's name to refer to His friends and supporters, such as in God's saying: *Help God, He will help you* (Qur'ān 47: 7); *Verily, those who harm God* (Qur'ān 33: 57), and: [...] *those who wage war against God* (Qur'ān 9: 107). In each of these examples, God uses his name to make reference to His friends. We know this because it is impossible to help, harm, or to wage war against God, but it *is* possible to help, harm, or wage war against the friends of God.
12. And finally, using the "village" to refer to its "inhabitants" as in God's saying: *And ask the village* (Qur'ān 12: 32), that is, "Ask the inhabitants of the village."[200]

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[199] Imām Nawawī mentions the Prophet's statement ﷺ"Verily in the body is a lump of flesh, if it is sound the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt the whole body is corrupt. Indeed it is the heart," and then he says, "This ḥadīth is advanced as proof for that the intellect is found in the heart, not in the head. And there is a famous disagreement about it. The view of our comrades (the Shāfiʿīs) and the overwhelming majority of the Speculative Theologians is that it is found in the heart. Abū H anifa said: "It is in the brain." And it is sometimes said, "In the head."" See *Shar ḥ Ṣaḥī ḥ Muslim*: Kitāb al-Musāqāt, ḥadīth #1599, 6/22

[200] All of these examples can be found mentioned in Imām Suyūtī's *Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān.*

All of these examples are taken from the Qur'ān, but the Sunna is similarly replete with metaphor. The following are examples to illustrate this:

1. Describing something with the name of its final consequence, as shown in the Prophet's saying, "Whoever has killed one who is killed while having evidence of it, then he has [the right to] his belongings."[201] In other words, "Whoever kills an enemy combatant (*Harbī*)," since it is impossible to kill someone who has already been killed. Likewise, it is established by Islamic law that it is not permissible to kill a Muslim or one who has protected status through a treaty, alliance, and the like.[202]
2. Using a word indicating the state of something to refer to the place where that state or condition is found. An example of this is in what the Prophet, may God bless and grant him peace, said to his wives, "The quickest of you to join me [after death] is the one of you with the longest hand." Imām al-Nawawī said, "[...The wives] thought that what was meant by 'the lengthiness of the hand' was the literal hand, which is the limb. So they measured their hands with a stick. Sawda happened to have the longest physical hand, but Zaynab had the longest hand in terms of charity and good works. When Zaynab was the first to die amongst them, they knew that the intent was the 'lengthiness of hand in charity and good works.' The scholars of language say: 'It is said: '*Fulān* is long of hand and long in goods' when he is forgiving and

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[201] The ḥadīth is reported by Imām Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in the Book of *Jihad*, Chapter: "The Right of the one Who kills to the belongings of the one killed," Ḥadīth #1751.

[202] The word *qatīl* can take the meaning of both the active and passive participles. It can be translated as 'combatant' if we take it as being an active participle, *qatil* (murderer or one trying to kill another). In this case, the ḥadīth would not be a metaphor. But if we interpret it as the passive participle, it translates as "one who is killed" (*maqtūl*).

> generous. The opposite of it is 'short of hand' and 'goods,' as well as being 'severed at the fingertips' [...]."[203]

From these examples, it becomes clear that figurative language in the Qur'ān is an undeniable occurrence. However, there is no basis to make any distinction between the verses that give some the impression that God has human characteristics and those verses that do not make reference to that.

In understanding the arguments why some Muslims today claim that there are no examples of figurative language in the Qur'ān, in the next chapter we examine the objections raised by Imām Ibn Ḥazm, who is considered to be as great as the founder of the Zahiri (literal) school of thought.

IBN ḤAZM AND MAJĀZ

A very important figure in this debate is Imām Ibn Ḥazm, the Literalist of Andalus who helped revive the Literalist School during his time. Literalists have been identified as one of the groups that have dissented from the majority of Muslim scholars who hold that figurative speech is found in the Qur'ān and the Sunna. If a certain group of Muslims are known to have literalist tendencies, their position on *ta'wil* and *majaz* should be easy to assume. However, a close examination of Ibn Ḥazm's writings reveal that his literalism was limited to matters of practice (*fiqh*), but in matters of creed, he was more in line with the non-literalists, despite his insistence that nothing in the Qur'ān and Sunna is figurative. Ibn Ḥazm says:

> And those who deny figurative language say: "Verily, *majāz* is a lie, and God, High is He, and His Messenger, may God bless and grant him peace, are far from speaking falsehood

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[203] This quote is from Nawawī's *Sharḥ* of *Ṣaḥī ḥ* Muslim: Book concerning the Virtues of the Companions, Chapter concerning "The virtues of Zaynab," Ḥadīth #2452.

> [...]" To such it should be said: "You have spoken the truth, but God's conveyance of a noun from what He attached to it from a particular place to another is not falsehood. On the contrary, it is the absolute truth because the truth is whatever God has done, and falsehood is whatever He has not ordered or has not done. Whoever believes that there is a truth that is a point of shame on God, High is He, and a halter for His actions that obliges God, Mighty and Majestic, to make His actions run according to it, he has disbelieved."[204]

So the Zāhirīs deny the occurrence of figurative language in the Qur'ān and the Sunna and consider it to be falsehood, because it is something subject to negation. Therefore, they would argue for example, that with regard to God's saying about the statement of Zakariyyā: *And the head has flared up in whiteness* (Qur'ān 19: 4), it could be negated by saying: *And the head has not flared up in whiteness*. To call God's words figurative speech, in their view, would mean to deny the true meaning that He intended, because if God says one thing but means its opposite, it would mean that His words are tantamount to being deceitful and High is God, in great Highness, above such a thing! However, Shaykh Muhibb Allāh says in *Shar ḥ Muslim al-Thabut fi Usul al-Fiqh*:

> To negate the true meaning is falsehood, not the [negation of the] figurative meaning that is intended. So ascribing falsehood to what is intended is not a necessary consequence.[205]

In other words, if God uses a phrase whose intended meaning is unapparent, i.e., figurative, then the figurative meaning is considered the true meaning, not the apparent meaning. And to deny that figurative meaning would be falsehood. Imām Shawkānī says:

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[204] *Al-Ihkām fī Usūl al-Ahkām li Ibn Ḥazm*: p. 448

[205] Ibn 'Abd al-Shakūr, Muhibb Allāh: *Sharḥ Muslim al-Thabut fi Usūl al-Fiqh* (1414/1994); This book is an appendage to Imām al-Ghazali's *al-Mustasfa min 'Ilm al-Usūl* along with *Kitāb Fawatih al-Rahamut* of Shaykh Nizām al-Din al-Ansāri, vol. 1 p. 288

> And just as figurative speech occurs in the Arabic language, it also occurs in the Qur'ān, according to the overwhelming majority, on numerous occasions in such a manner that it only escapes one who makes no distinction between the literal and figurative expression. Its negation from the Qur'ān has been related about the Zāhirīs while this is not the first issue that they have taken a rigid stance on [one] that fairness denies, comprehension condemns, and reason rejects [...] There exists nothing at the moment that requires mentioning some of the figurative expressions that occur in the Qur'ān, while the matter is more apparent than that. So just as *majāz* occurs in the Qur'ān on numerous occasions, it also occurs in the Sunna on numerous occasions, and denying the occurrence of this is a point of bewilderment unworthy of a response."[206]

In reality, saying that the Zāhiris deny the occurrence of figurative language in the Qur'ān and Sunna only means that they prohibited applying the term *majāz* to God's words, due to the fact that in their view, this expression gives the impression of deceitfulness and the very absence of truth. However, in my opinion, the Zāhirī view is built upon the basis that God is the Creator of all languages. So as long as He is the Creator of them, then He has the right to express, utilize, and transfer meanings in any way that He deems fit. Every action undertaken by the Creator of language is done so according to its true and literal indication and in accord with the way He designed. This understanding is supported by Ibn Ḥazm's own statement:

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[206] Al-Shawkani, Mu ḥammad ibn 'Ali: *Irshād al-Fuḥūl ila Taḥqiq al-Haqq min 'Ilm al-Usūl*, 1413 AH/1992 pp. 1/117-118

> And names are designed to refer to particular things by either divine situating or human convention. There is no Revealer except God, Mighty and Majestic. So when the First Situator, Mighty and Majestic, places a noun to refer to a particular thing at any time or regarding a particular meaning, and thereafter transfers that noun to another meaning in another place, then there is no falsehood in that. There is no point of entry for lying in any of them (the nouns). Rather, the liar would be he who transfers from us a noun beyond its original signification in the language to another meaning to cause confusion by it without proof. So *he* is the lying, scandalous, sinner. Similarly, if two people were to agree to assign a name to something or a particular noun invented by the two of them or transferred from meaning one thing to mean another by which they comprehend one another, not to cause confusion, then there is no falsehood in that. If this is permissible between us to do, then it is for He who obliges all others to worship Him and obey Him as much as possible [to do], while God, High is He, is more suited to do that.[207]

He further explains that,

> Every address that God, High is He, or His Messenger, may God bless and grant him peace, delivers while being taken according to its original signification in the language and recognized in it, unless it is [contradicted] by an explicit text, unanimous consensus, or [due to] what the senses produce, we testify that that noun, God, High is He, or His Messenger, may God bless and grant him peace, has been transferred from one signification to another meaning [...] Therefore, every word that God, High is He, transfers from its original signification in the language to another meaning, if God, High is He, has made it a ritual for us in word and deed like *Salāt* (prayer) *Zakāt* (poor due) *Hajj* (the pilgrimage) *Sawm* (fasting) *Ribā'* (usury), and other

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[207] Ibn Ḥazm, Abu Muḥammad 'Ali, *Al-Ihkām li Ibn Ḥazm*, p. 448

> than that, then none of that is figurative speech. Rather, it is a proper designation and a true noun that is binding and arranged according to how God, High is He, designed it. As for what God, High is He, transfers from its original signification in the language and made a ritual for us to act in accord with it without designating to it that [particular] name, this is the figurative expression, like His statement, High is He: *And lower to them (the parents) the wing of humility out of mercy* (Qur'ān 17: 24). For sure, God, High is He, has made it ritual for us to exhibit humility toward parents and to show them compassion. Yet, God, High is He, has never obliged us to utter—and with obligation—between ourselves—that humility has a wing, and there is no difference about it. However, such is not the case with *Salāt*, *Zakāt*, and *Siyām*, since there is no difference of opinion that it is a duty upon us to call to these deeds with these names exactly, and inescapably so. And by God, High is He, comes success.[208]

Shaykh Muhibb Allāh in attempting to provide further clarification to what the Zāhirīs might mean writes:

> And maybe what they mean is that it [figurative language] did not come about as the result of the actions of the divine Lawgiver, since figurative speech only results from the law governing language, not by any invention from Him. Rather, the occurrence of figurative speech in the speech of the Arabs is the result of their doing, and perhaps the intent of the speaker is that there is no *majāz* in the Qur'ān, which is God's speech, High is He, and His uncreated attribute. Yet, *majāz* does exist in the speech of the Arabs, and it is the speech that is pronounced and recited upon tongues. As for their saying: "If *majāz* existed in the Qur'ān it would be a necessary result that The Creator (*al-Bārī*) would be [called] *al-Mutajawwiz* (One who speaks figuratively). But it is improper, just as it is not proper to refer to Him, Be

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[208] Ibid., pp. 447-448

> He Glorified, as being *al-Mutajawwiz.*" So the response to this is that [the name *Mutajawwiz*] gives the impression of imperfection, since it is [also used to indicate] translocation from one place to another. Therefore, it is not applied to Him, not because He did not mention figurative statements in His speech, or [because] there was no direction given by the Divine Lawgiver [to apply that name to Him], while God's names, High is He, are [established only] by revelation. Thus, *al-Mutajawwiz* is not applied to Him because of this, not as a result of Him not mentioning *majāz.*[209]

Furthermore, what demonstrates that the Zāhirīs do not negate the existence of figurative language in the Qur'ān but merely as a technical application to it can be determined from what Ibn Ḥazm says concerning God's statement: *And ask the village that we were in, and the caravan that we approached in* (Qur'ān 12: 82). He says:

> Some people say: "Its meaning is: 'And ask the people of the village, and ask the people of the caravan.'" Others have said: "Jacob is a prophet, so if he was to ask the actual caravan and the actual village, they would have answered him." [In actual fact] both matters are possible. An example to prove this point is God's statement, High is He: *A wall wanting to fall* (Qur'ān 18: 77). We already know by the immediate judgment of reason that the wall has no heart and that desire only happens with the heart of the living thing. This is 'desire' as commonly understood which only applies in the language. So when we found that God, High is He, has applied this description to the wall that contains nothing that necessitates that it be given this designation, we knew with certainty that God, Mighty and Majestic, has transferred the noun, "wanting," in this place to [mean] "the leaning of the wall." So He called "leaning," "wanting."

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[209] Ibn 'Abd al-Shakūr, Muhibb Allāh, *Sharḥ Muslim Al-Thabūt*, vol. 1 p. 288

We have already stated that God, High is He, may name whatever He pleases with whatever He pleases, except that that does not necessarily mean that He has transferred the true meanings that God has arranged in His creation beyond their degrees, nor that He has transferred that noun to a place other than the place that the Creator [originally] transferred it to. Had it not been for the immediateness [of the judgment of reason] that we mentioned, we would have not deemed it permissible to rule about a noun that it is transferred from its [original] designation by any means.

And some people have said: "Verily, God, High is He, is capable of producing desire into the wall." And undoubtedly so! He is capable of whatever He pleases [...] however, any time an explicit text does not come to us [indicating] that God, High is He, has broken the natural flow of familiar things with what by which His words are perfected, it is considered to be a thing belied, just as any claimant who does not bring forth proof is one with an invalid claim.

Similarly, is His saying, High is He: *And it runs with them in a wave like mountains* (Qur'ān 11: 42), since God, High is He, referred to the movement of the ship as "running," while the movement of the ship is involuntary. This is an example of what we said about the fact that God, High is He, names whatever He pleases with whatever He pleases. So He is the Creator of names and all things given names. And rightfully so. There is no God but He!

As for His saying, High is He: *And they were made to drink in their hearts the calf due to their unbelief* (Qur'ān 2: 93), God, High is He, merely meant: "The love of the calf" in accordance with what we mentioned [falling under the category] of "omitting something while using another expression in its stead."

And as for His saying, High is He: *The day We say to Hell: Have you become full? And it says: Are there more?* (Qur'ān

> 50: 30), it is in our view a literal expression and a true pronouncement made by it.[210]

Then Ibn Ḥazm further says:

> And as a whole, whoever wants to remove things from their true meanings in [their] origins, and then from their true meanings in familiar expressions, he should be declared suspect in [both] his faith and his intentions. But if he is free of that, he must have a flaw in his intelligence, or strength in his ignorance.[211]

Based upon these extensive comments of Ibn Ḥazm, may God show him mercy, it is clear that what he means by "origins" is the original significations and meanings of words. As for "familiars," he means "Those things customarily understood by the Arabs from the meanings of words transferred from their original significations," whereas were one to construe something customarily understood by the Arabs according to its original sense, like "the wall's desire," then it is befitting that such a person has his intentions and sincerity questioned or even the degree of his sanity.

From what has so far been said, we could safely conclude that the Zāhirīs *do not* negate figurative language. They merely object to applying the name *majāz* to God's words. Therefore, Shawkānī's statement, "And its negation from the Qur'ān has been related about the Zāhirīs [...]" is not accepted at face value. Furthermore, he stated it with the expression indicative of weakness, which confirms the soundness of my view. If the view and arguments of others who denied the occurrence of figurative language in the Qur'ān and the Sunna are similar to that of Ibn Ḥazm, we can safely say that there is no difference of opinion that figurative language does in fact occur in the Qur'ān and the Sunna. And God knows best.

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[210] Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkam*, pp. 449-450

[211] Ibid., p. 451

THE SALAF WHO USED TA'WĪL

Many of the prominent *Salaf* used *ta'wīl* (figurative interpretation) because they understood that many expressions in the Qur'ān are to be taken metaphorically. In what follows, is a list of some of those statements.

1. Ibn 'Abbās

Ibn Abū Hātim reports with a fair chain of narration that Ibn 'Abbās said concerning: *So wherever you may turn, there is God's face* (Qur'ān 2: 115) that it meant, "God's prayer direction" (*Qibla*). Were we to accept the literal meaning of this verse, we would have to accept that God is everywhere in every place, including inside of us and inside of anything impure. For this reason, Ibn 'Abbās interpreted this verse. Ibn 'Abbās also interpreted the "shin" mentioned in the verse: *The day that a shin will be exposed* (Qur'ān 68: 42) to mean "severity." That is, "The day that a severity will be exposed." Explaining this verse, Imām al-Tabarī said:

> A group of the Prophet's companions and their disciples, and the people of figurative interpretation have said: "He will uncover a severe matter." And among those who interpreted the shin to mean "severity" from the Imāms of Qur'ānic exegesis are Mujāhid, Sa'īd bin Jubayr, Qatāda, and others. God, be He exalted, said: *And the sky, we built it with hands. And it is We who give expanse* (Qur'ān 51: 47). Ibn 'Abbās said concerning it: "with strength."[212]

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[212] *Tafsīr* al-Tabarī: 27/57.

That is, "We built it with strength." Al-Tabarī also stated that Mujāhid, Qatāda, Mansūr ibn al-Ma'mar, Ibn Zayd, and Sufyān all gave the same interpretation of this verse as Ibn 'Abbās.[213]

In the verse: *So today We will forget them just as they forgot the meeting of this day of theirs* (Qur'ān 7: 51) Ibn 'Abbās said, "Forgetting is abandoning."[214] That is, when God says that He will forget people, He means that He will abandon them, since it is not possible for God to forget: *And your Lord is never forgetful* (Qur'ān 19: 64). Mujāhid and al-Tabarī both agreed with the interpretation of Ibn 'Abbās. Another example of Ibn 'Abbās' employment of figurative interpretation is with relation to God's saying: [...] *And, so that you will be brought up on My eye* (Qur'ān 20: 39). He said, "It means: 'I have cast unto you love from Me out of mercy, and so that it might be made on my eye: fostering and nourishing over a place of view from Me.' That is, he (Noah) has special care from God."[215] Ibn 'Abbās also said about God's saying: *His footstool encompasses the Heavens and Earth* (Qur'ān 2: 255), His footstool means "His knowledge."[216]

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[213] Ibid., 27/57.

[214] Ibid.

[215] *Al-Darr al-Manthūr:* 5/211.

[216] Al-Tabarī reports this statement in 3/9 with a fair (*Hasan*) chain of narration. However, Ibn Mandah declared it to be weak (*da'īf*) due to one of its narrators, Ibn Abū Al-Muğhīra. Despite that, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal declared Ibn Abū al-Muğhīra to be reliable, and Bukhārī narrates a report absent of a chain on his authority while using a wording indicative of soundness. This is important since it has been substantiated that those reports void of chains mentioned by Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥī ḥ*, when he mentions them with a wording indicative of strength and soundness like, "he said," "he did," or "he mentioned," they are taken to be *Ṣaḥī ḥ* reports. So all of this overshadows Ibn Mandah's weakening of the hadith due to Ibn Abū al-Muğhīra. And God knows best. Also refer to *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* of Ibn Hajar: 1/312-313.

2. *Ahmad ibn Hanbal*

Imām Abū Hāmid al-Ġhazālī says:

> I have heard the reliable Imāms of the Ḥanbalīs in Baġhdād say that Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, may God show him mercy, expressly interpreted three ḥadīths: One of them is, "The Black Stone is God's right hand in the Earth." The second is his saying, may God bless and grant him peace, "The heart of the believer is between two of the fingers of the All-Merciful." And the third is his saying, may God bless and grant him peace, "Verily, I feel the breath of the All-Merciful from the direction of the right hand."

As for the first ḥadīth, "The Black Stone is God's right hand in the Earth," Imām Aḥmad is reported to have said about it as stated by Imām al-Ġhazālī:

> The right hand is kissed customarily as a means of drawing near to its possessor, and the Black Stone is also kissed as a means of drawing near to God, be He Exalted! So he drew an analogy for the right hand—not with His being, or with the attributes of His being—but with one of its non-essential occurrences. So He called that a right hand [...]

An Objection

After mentioning Imām al-Ġhazālī's citation and explanation of this ḥadīth, Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Sāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn writes that:

> It is a false ḥadīth. Ibn al-Jawzī said in *al-'Ilal al-Mutanāhiya*: "The ḥadīth is not sound," and Ibn al-'Arabī said: "A false ḥadīth. It is not confirmed." Based on this, there is no need to indulge in its meaning.[217]

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[217] *Al-Qawā'id al-Muthlā*, pp. 49-52

The Response

The fact that the ḥadīth is or isn't sound does not detract from the fact that Imām A ḥmad interpreted it. So this contention made by Shaykh al-'Uthaymīn has no relation to the area of dispute. The argument here is not whether or not the ḥadīth was sound.

A Second Objection

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyya said:

> What is more popular regarding [this] report is that it is from Ibn 'Abbās. He said: "The Black Stone is God's right hand in the Earth. So whoever touches it, and kisses it, then it is as if he has shaken hands with God and kissed His right hand." Whoever ponders over the wording that has been transmitted, it becomes clear to him that there is nothing problematic about it. For he said: "God's right hand in the Earth," and he did not leave it unqualified by simply saying, "God's right hand." The ruling of the expression that is qualified contradicts the ruling of the one that is unqualified. Then he said: "So whoever touches it and kisses it, it is as if he has shaken hands with God and kissed Him." This clearly indicates that the person touching [the stone] did not shake the right hand of God at all. Rather, he was merely equated with the one who shakes God's hand. So the beginning of the ḥadīth and the end of it make it clear that the Stone is not one of God's attributes, be He exalted, as is known to every rational person.[218]

Response

These comments made by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya, that the report is more popularly known to be a statement of Ibn 'Abbās does not change the fact that Imām A ḥmad did in fact interpret it. Furthermore, if it is argued that Imām Ahmad did not interpret the ḥadīth (whether we ascribe it to the Prophet or Ibn 'Abbās) then we know that Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya has also interpreted it without even realizing it. So his objections stand as an argument against him as opposed to an argument for him, and his explanation is nothing more than what the overwhelming majority of scholars say about the definition of *ta'wīl*: "Directing the expression away from the apparent indication to the weightier indication with proof that supports that redirection."

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[218] *Majmū`a al-Fatāwā*, 6/398

The proof that diverts a word or expression from being understood according to its original signification is called an "indication" (qarīna). It sometimes appears in line with the original expression or comment, sometimes it appears in a totally different comment, and at other times it can be a characteristic in the speaker that requires this diversion. So, just as Ibn Taymiyya negated that the "right hand" was real due to the fact that the report added the words "in the Earth" (since it is impossible for God to take up residence in his creation) it was also his duty to give the same explanation and express the same impossibility about the Prophet's statement to the slave woman, "Where is God?" when she said, "In Heaven." For it is impossible for God to exist within His creation. As a matter of fact, Ibn Taymiyya also interprets the preposition "in" in this ḥadīth to mean "over," just as he interprets the entire expression "in Heaven" to mean "in Highness." [219]

As for the second ḥadīth, "The heart of the believer is between two of the fingers of the All-Merciful,"[220] Imām al-Ġhazālī reports that the reliable Ḥanbalī Imāms he met in Baġhdād during his time mentioned that Imām A ḥmad's interpretation of this ḥadīth was that it meant, "the spirit of the two fingers." Al-Ġhazālī says:

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[219] Refer to *Majmū'a al-Fatāwā:* Kitāb al-Īmān/al-'Itiqād

[220] Al-'Uthaymīn agrees that this ḥadīth is *Ṣaḥī ḥ* (*Al-Qawā'id al-Muthlā*, pp. 51-52)

> [...] And it is the spiritual rational finger. I mean that the spirit of the finger is what by which altering things is made easy. And the heart of man is between the touch of the angel and the devil. And by them, God, be He Exalted, alters hearts. So he used the two fingers to indirectly refer to them.

The third ḥadīth interpreted by Imām Aḥmad is, "Verily I feel the breath of the All-Merciful from the direction of the right hand."[221]

A Third Objection

Ibn Taymiyya says about this, "This narration is a lie on Aḥmad."[222]

Response

Simply because a scholar may not like what he hears about his Imām does not disqualify the argument, nor does it weaken the narration. It would have been more fitting for Shaykh al-Islām to invalidate the report of Hujja al-Islām, instead of accusing him or those from whom he took the report of lying.

A Fourth Objection

Concerning this ḥadīth, Shaykh Muḥammad bin Sāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn says:

> [The author of] *Maqāyīs al-Luġha said*: "The breath is every thing that is utilized to give relief from a distress." So the meaning of the ḥadīth would be that God's granting of relief, be He Exalted, to the believers would be from the People of Yemen. Shaykh al-Islām [Ibn Taymiyya] said: "These are they who fought the apostates and opened up

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[221] All of this can be verified in *Faysal al-Tafriqa bayn al-Islām wal-Zandaqa* of Imām al-Ghazālī, pp. 83-84.

[222] *Majmū'a al-Fatāwā*, 5/398

the [different] metropolises. So by them, the All-Merciful gave relief to the believers from the distresses." [223]

Response

In this instance, both 'Uthaymīn and Ibn Taymiyya interpret this ḥadīth without realizing it, and establish the proof against themselves that figurative interpretation is permissible and valid, despite the fact that they are in the process of attempting to refute those who permit it. What we can conclude from this, is that in attempting to cast aspersion on the reports, what has actually been achieved is the strengthening of the case for interpreting these reports.

Ibn Kathīr reports in *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* that Imām A ḥmad said about God's saying: *And your Lord comes* (Qur'ān 89: 22), "That is, His reward comes." Imām al-Bayhaqī said, "This is a chain that has no dust on it."[224] Imām A ḥmad's nephew, Ḥanbal, said that he heard him say:

> They argued against me on the day of the (great) debate [munāzara], and they said: "Sūra al-Baqara will come on the Day of Resurrection." He [Imām Aḥmad] said: "So I said to them: "That is merely the reward [of Sūra al-Baqara]."[225]

3.Imām Bukhārī

Imām al-Bayhaqī reports that Imām al-Bukhārī said concerning the ḥadīth: "God laughs at two men, one of them kills the other, and both of them enter Paradise," that laughing means, "mercy." [226] That is, "God shows mercy to both of them."

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[223] *Al-Fatāwā*: 6/396, *al-Qawā`id al-Muthlā*: 51-52

[224] 1/327

[225] For this report, refer to Imām al-Rāzī's *Asās al-Taqdīs*, p.108, and Dhahabī's *Siyar 'Alām al-Nubalā*: 5/11.

[226] *Al-Asmā wa al-Sifāt*: 470

4.SUFYĀN IBN 'UYAYNA

Imām al-Bayhaqī and Ḥāfiz al-Dhahabī report that Imām Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna interpreted the following ḥadīth, "The last step that the All-Merciful took was in Wajj." Sufyān said: "And Wajj is a valley in Ta'īf. It means, 'the last offensive that the Messenger of God launched, may God bless and grant him peace, was in Ta'īf."[227]

4.Sufyān al-Thawrī

Sufyān al-Thawrī said concerning God's saying: *And He is with you wherever you are* (Qur'ān 57: 4) "It means: with His knowledge." Shaykh ʿĪsā al-Himyarī says:

> It has been confirmed about all of the *Salaf* that they agreed on interpreting the "withness" mentioned in the verse to mean "knowledge." And this agreement alone is sufficient to repel the extremists among the Anthropomorphists of our time.[228]

BILĀ KAYF: WITHOUT 'HOW?'

A man came to Imām Mālik and said: "God says: *The All-Merciful became established on the Throne* (Qur'ān 20: 5) and asked: "How did God mount the throne?" Imām Mālik inclined his head and was silent until the sweat of fever covered his brow, then he looked up and said: "*Istiwā* (establishment) is not unknown, the modality of it is inconceivable in the mind; but belief in it is obligatory, and inquiring about it is a heretical innovation. You are an innovator." And he gave orders for him to be taken out.

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[227] Refer to *Siyar 'Alām al-Nubalā*: 7/274, and *al-Asmā wa al-Sifāt*: 470.

[228] This can be found in Shaykh al-Himyarī's, *Tashīh al-Mafāhīm al-'Aqadiyya*, p.104.

What did Imām Mālik mean when he said, "the modality of it is inconceivable in the mind," or as in another version, "The 'How' is unknown"?

Ibn Taymiyya says:

> Verily, we do not comprehend the "howness" (*kayfiyya*) of the establishment. Rather, We are ignorant of it. And surely His establishment is [something] known as He reported in His Book, and it is as it befits Him.[229]

According to this statement of Ibn Taymiyya, the noun *kayf* (how) is equated with the noun *kayfiyya* (howness/modality). As a result of this, he believed that the "establishment" (*istiwā*) is to be taken literally while consigning the modality (*kayfiyya*) of it to God. But to take it literally would be to say that God is sitting and resting upon one of His creation and is carried by it. This gives the impression that God is imperfect, since it would imply that God is in need of place to exist,[230] while we know from God's clear verses that He is independent and free of all needs.

The claim made by some that He is over the Throne but not in contact with it or carried by it is an understanding that does not originate from the Arabic language as understood by the Arabs of the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān. When the verb *istiwā*[231] is combined with the preposition *'alā* it means that the doer of the action *fā'il* is resting on top of something else, as in God's statement: *In order that you may mount on their backs, and then may remember the Favor of your Lord when you mount thereon [...]"* (Qur'ān 43: 13) since that would imply that God is also resting upon top of the Throne as one rest on top of a horse or chair, we know that this verse cannot be taken literally since God is free of all needs and it is impossible for His creation to carry Him.

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[229] *Al-'Ulūw li al-'Alī al-Ghaffār*, pp. 103-104.

[230] Ibn Taymiyya and those who followed him believe that God needs a place to exist, which goes against the firmly established attribute of self-sufficiency (al-ghinā) that necessitates that God is absolutely independent of all needs.

[231] *Istawā* means to be straight, even, or on even plain. When it is used with the preposition *'alā* (on) it means, "To be level upon something." In other words, it means "to be settled upon."

As for its true meaning, that is only known to God, and the *madhhab* of the *Salaf* was to pass over such verses, not stopping to ponder their intent, since they were ambiguous (*mutashābih*). To stop upon an allegorical verse and use it to say that God has a place and that that place is over the Throne would be equivalent to following the ambiguous verses of the Qur'ān, and God condemned those who did such.

As for Ibn Taymiyya and those who follow him, their deduction was the result of what they understood from Imām Mālik's objection, and their equating the word *kayf* with the word *kayfiyya*, while these two terms have two distinct uses in the language. In an attempt to end the debate over the issue, let us refer to the authorities of language to see what they say.

Imām Al-Fayyūmī says in *al-Misbāh al-Munīr*:

> *Kayf* is a word used to inquire about the state and description of something [...]. It also is used to indicate astonishment, for censure, for condemnation, and for the state without being connected to a question. As for the *kayfiyya* of something, it is its state and its description.[232]

Mālik did not say, "The *kayfiyya* is not comprehended." Rather, he said, the "*Kayf* (Howness) is not comprehended." That is, the inquiry itself: "how was it done?" Meaning that such a question—in addition to not being applicable to God—was not heard from the *Salaf*. This is why he said, "inquiring about it is a heretical innovation." So the pronoun "it" is a reference to the "establishment," and not a reference to the so-called *kayfiyya* or *kayf*. Consequently, his meaning is that believing in the establishment is obligatory, and not the believing in the *kayfiyya* (the modality of how it is done, or "howness"). As for inquiring about the establishment (*istiwā*) "it is a heretical innovation." What supports this interpretation of Imām Mālik, is what Imām al-Bayhaqī reports with a sound chain of narration on the authority of Abū al-Rabīʿ al-Rushaydī from Ibn Wahb that Mālik said when he was asked about the establishment:

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[232] Al-Fayyūmī, *al-Misbāh al-Munīr* p. 281

> *The All-Merciful became established on the Throne* as He described Himself. "How" (*kayf*) is not said, and "How" is removed from Him. Then [Imām Mālik] said: "And you are the proponent of an innovation. Remove him!"[233]

So when Mālik says, "The establishment is not unknown, the modality of it is inconceivable in the mind; but belief in it is obligatory, and inquiring about it is a heretical innovation," the pronoun—it—in, "belief in it" and "inquiring about it" refers to the "establishment."[234]

Ibn Mājishūn said:

> "How" is said for the one who was not and then became. As for He who does not change, does not pass away, and has always been, He has no equal. For surely, none know how He is but Him [...][235]

So it is clear that the true position of Imām Mālik, may God be pleased with him, was to acknowledge God's pronouncement of the establishment without asking about it, not about the modality (*kayfiyya*) as some have mistaken. Add to that, the approach of the *Salaf* was to let the reports pass as they have come while consigning the true intent to God.

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[233] Al-Bayhaqi, Abu Bakr ibn Al-Husayn ibn 'Ali: *Al-Asmā wa al-Sifāt*, 1423 AH/2002 p. 411

[234] This is the same version that Shaykh 'Uthaymīn supported in his *Qawā'id*.

[235] *Al-'Ulūw li al-'Alī al-Ghaffār*, p. 106. Hāfiz Dhahabī reported it without a chain as most of the reports from the *Salaf* on this topic mentioned in this work of his.

Descending

The Prophet ﷺ said:

> God descends every night to the sky of the world when the last third of the night remains. He says: "Who is calling on me so that I might answer him? Who is petitioning so that I may give him? Who is asking Me for forgiveness so that I might forgive him?"[236]

If we accepted that God descends in a literal sense, it would mean that God changes from one state to another, and that He can exist inside of His creation. If He can change from one state to another he would not be eternal, since it would mean that He is affected by time and limited by space, since change can only occur within the realm of time, and time only applies to created beings. If He existed inside His creation it would mean that He has limits set to Him and that His creation is greater than He is in size. However, the finite creation cannot contain the infinite Creator, and the statement الله أكبر (God is greater or larger) clearly indicates that nothing is greater than God in state or status. If limits were set to Him it would mean that someone or something would have had to set limits to Him. If this were so, it would mean that God has a creator, which is absolutely impossible. Even if we said that God's descent does not occur in a place inside of His creation, it would mean that He descends in a place outside of His creation, which would still mean that He remains inside of His creation, since He is the Creator of place.

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[236] Bukhārī reports it in *Kitāb al-Tahajjud*, Muslim in *Kitāb al-Musāfirīn*, Abū Dāwūd in *Kitāb al-Sunna*, Tirmidhī in *Kitāb al-Salāt*, and *Kitāb al-Da'awāt*, Ibn Māja in *Kitāb al-Iqāma*, Dārimī in *Kitāb al-Salāt*, Mālik in his *Muwatta'*, and Aḥmad in his *Musnad*.

The truth is that God does not require space or a place to exist as the creation does. God created both time and space, and before the creation of anything there was only Him as indicated by the Prophet's statement in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, "God was, and there was nothing other than Him." In another narration, the Prophet said: "God was, and there was nothing with Him." So if there was nothing with Him, there was no time or places either. This is why we find statements like the one attributed to 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib, may God be pleased with him, "God was while there was no space. And He is now upon what He was upon." That is, He continues to be without space. Add to the proofs that support this understanding, the statement of the Prophet ﷺ:

> You are The First. So, there is nothing before You. You are The Last. So, there is nothing after You. You are The Evident. So, there is nothing above You. You are The Hidden. So, there is nothing below You.[237]

So if there is nothing below Him, the Throne is also not below Him. Were we to accept the ḥadīths relating to God's descent at face value, it would mean that God is constantly in the lowest Heaven and is never above His Throne. The reason for this is that the Earth is a rotating sphere, and it is always the last-third of the night somewhere on Earth. Therefore, God would always be in the Lowest Heaven, and not above the Throne. As for all the verses of the Qur'ān and ḥadīths that give the impression that God is in a place, they are not to be taken literally, because of the reasons that have been mentioned, and because they are from the ambiguous verses.

As for the *madhhab* of the *Salaf,* they read these verses and ḥadīths as they came without changing their apparent meanings and without making any specific judgment about them. Their focus was on the clear verses, and those that they could apply in their lives.

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[237] Imām Muslim reported it in *The Book of Supplications*

Coming and Arriving

God says: *Do they but wait until God comes to them in the shadows of the clouds?* (Qur'ān 2: 210) The reason that "coming" or "arriving"' is considered to be a sign of imperfection with respect to God is that it also would indicate motion and a transformation in His being, which are characteristic of creation. It would also mean that He exists within the parameters of space and has limits set to Him.

In reality, God's mentioning that He will come on the Day of Judgment is a metaphor similar to other metaphors employed by the Arabs. Since none of us has seen God, when we actually see Him it is as if He has come to us as when one of us finally sees someone whose arrival we have been long waiting for. Or it is what Imām Aḥmad ibn H anbal said about it, "God's command will come." Since God's command to begin the resurrection and judgment is such a serious thing, instead, He said that *He* would come in order to show the importance and gravity that we should give to that day.

Direction

Based on what has preceded, it becomes clear that the *Salaf* did not assign God a direction. That is, one text cannot be given preference over another. The *madhhab* of the *Salaf* as mentioned before, was to simply say what God says about His self without any addition. This is what they meant by their saying: بلا كيف "without How." If someone were to ask, "Where is God?" to answer, "In the sky" would not necessarily be incorrect. However, were someone to answer, "In the Heavens and the Earth," they would be correct, since they are following the approach of the

Salaf: simply saying what God said about His self without any additional comments. If one were to also answer, "He is near," "He is closer to me than my jugular vein," "Wherever I turn there is His face," or "He is with me wherever I am," this would all be in accord with the *madhhab* of the *Salaf*. If someone objects to one saying "He is with me wherever I am" by saying, "Do you mean that God is everywhere?" one should reply by saying, "The Salaf did not ask "How." I simply say about God what He said about His self without asking how," or, "He is as He said in a way that befits His majesty." And this is the same answer that should be given for all the preceding sayings.

As for those who insist on saying that it is compulsory to believe that God's direction is up and His place is above the Throne, they have no evidence from the Qur'ān and Sunna to give preference to those verses and ḥadīths over any of the aforementioned. One side of an empty scale will not outweigh the other unless there's pressure applied to that side. This is exactly what these people do. Let them consider the Prophet's statement, "The closest that a servant comes to His Lord is while he is prostrating."[238] So are we to conclude that God is underneath my forehead when I am in prostration? I think not.

Extremities

Hands, feet, eyes, and a face are considered to be signs of imperfection, because they are tools, and God does not need a tool to do anything. He is in no need to have eyes to see, ears to hear, or hands to operate. If we were to consider any of these things necessary, it would mean that He is not perfect without them just as it would mean that He is not self-sufficient and free of need. For this reason, we know that those verses and ḥadīths making mention of these things are not to be taken literally.

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[238] Reported by Muslim, Nasā'ī, and A ḥmad

As for the approach of the *Salaf*, they would simply read these texts as they were, without pausing and pondering on them or making any specific comment unless it was totally necessary as in the case of Imām Aḥmad above. Although they made no comment most of the time, they never understood them literally, which would mean to give God distinctly human characteristics. Neither did they assume that that just because God annexed His name or pronoun to a thing that it meant that the thing annexed was an attribute of His essence as many erroneously did and continue to do today. Otherwise, they would have said that God has a soul from His statement about Adam: *And [when] I've blown into him from My spirit* (Qur'ān 38: 72), but no one says that God has a soul.

The literal meaning of any word in Arabic is the first meaning in which that word was used. The literal meanings of hands and feet are those that specifically apply to human beings or other animals like them such as apes. When someone says that God has hands and that those hands are real hands in their literal sense but not as you can imagine, this is a play with words and not the way the Arabs during the time of the revelation understood those words in their literal sense.

So, if the words are not being used in their literal sense as understood by those Arabs, none have the right to assign to them a different meaning of which those Arabs did not understand. Any other meaning expressed for those words would be figurative meanings. Thus, it would mean that the hands or feet are not real hands or feet, since real hands or feet are characteristic of creation alone.

As for most of the *Salaf*, they would merely describe God as He described Himself without adding anything else to what He said about His self. This is why we find the statement of Shāfi'ī, "I believe in God and in what has come about God according to the intent of God."[239] And this is clearly what is known as *tafwīd*, or entrusting the knowledge of the allegorical verses and ḥadīths to God. That is to say, they did not take them to be literal, but at the same time they did not say what the intent might be, especially since there is no obligation to give an alternative meaning to such texts. The *Salaf* focused on the context of those verses, and pursued those parts of them that could be implemented in their lives.

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[239] Ibn Qudāma quotes him in his *Lumha al-Itiqād*. Also refer to Shaykh Jibrīn's *Sharḥ Lumha al-Itiqād*, p. 89.

BIOGRAPHIES

ABŪ BAKR IBN AL-'ARABĪ: He is Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad al-Ma'āfirī, the famous Mālikī judge and jurisprudent of Seville, Spain. His father, 'Abdullāh, was one of the jurists and leading personalities of Seville. Ibn al-'Arabī excelled at the religious sciences and wrote many beneficial works. Of his most famous works are, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, al-'Awāḥim min al-Qawāḥim, al-Qabas fī Sharḥ Muwaṭṭa' Ibn Anas, 'Ārida al-Aḥwadhī*, and many others. He died in the year 543. See: Jalal al-Dīn al-Suyuti, *Tabaqāt al-Ḥuffāz*; Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayāt al-'Ayān* (1/488) and the introduction to *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Maktaba Dār al-Bāz: 1996/1416)

ABŪ AL-ḤASAN AL-ASH'ARĪ: He is 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl ibn Abū Bishr Isḥāq ibn Sālim 'Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī al-Yemenī al-Baġhdādī, the descendant of the Yemenī Companion, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī. He was the stepson and pupil of the Mu'tazilite scholar, Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī at the outset of his studies, but once he reached the age of 40, he abandoned the Mu'tazilite doctrines when al-Jubbā'ī failed to resolve for him an issue concerning the supposed obligation of God to do what is most fitting and in the best interest of His creation, which was one of the pivotal tenets of the Mu'tazilite creed. He announced his repentance from the Mu'tazilite doctrines and aligned himself with the mainstream Sunni scholars of Islam in his time. Upon leaving Basra, he relocated to Baġhdad and became the pupil of Abū Isḥāq al-Marwazī, from whom he took *fiqh*. He then dedicated much of his life to the refutation of the Muʿtazilites, Shiites, and other sects that appeared in Islam. He was given credit for codifying the creed of the mainstream Sunni Muslims, and was declared to be the Imām of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa* of his time by later Sunni authorities. Much misinformation is spread about him and those who adopted his approach in creedal matters today, and there is doubt about the ascription of certain books to him, like *Kitāb al-Ibāna ʿan Usūl al-Diyāna*. He died in the year 324. See: Ibn al-Subkī, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya* and Ibn Qādi Shuhba, *Tabaqāt al-Fuqahā al-Shāfiʿiyya*

DĀRAQUTNĪ: He is ʿAlī ibn ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn Mahdī ibn Masʿūd ibn al-Nuʿān ibn Dīnār ibn ʿAbd Allāh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Baġhdādī al-Dāraqutnī, the great ḥadīth Master (Ḥāfiz) whose work, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, represents perhaps the final record of ḥadīth compilation in Islamic history, since this period marks the end of the documentation of the Prophetic tradition. He was an adherent to the Shāfiʿī School of law. He died in the year 385. See: Ibn Qādi Shuhba, *Tabaqāt al-Fuqahā al-Shāfiʿyya* (1/137-138) Maktaba al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, Taḥqīq ʿAlī Mu ḥammad ʿUmar

FAKHR AL-RĀZĪ: He is Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Qurashī al-Taymī al-Bakrī, also known as Ibn Khatīb al-Rayy, the famous Shafiʿī speculative theologian and jurist. He authored close to 200 works. Among them are his famous exegesis, *Mafātiḥ al-Ġhayb*, and his book on legal theory, *al-Maḥsūl*. He was well known for his prolix writings on speculative theology and his debates with the Karmathians (*karrāmiyya*), who are believed by some to have had a hand in Imam al-Rāzi's death by way of poison. The Ḥanbalis condemned him for indulging into *ta'wīl* and speculative theology. Others also condemned him because of his closeness to the ruling class and his amassing of enormous wealth. He died in the year 606. See: Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (8/560-562)

ḤĀFIZ IBN ḤAJAR: He is Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Fadl Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-'Asqalānī, perhaps the most famous ḥadīth Master ever to write on the subject of ḥadīth science and ḥadīth interpretation. He was from Asqalān, a city off the coast of Shām, which is part of Palestine, and he was born and raised in Egypt. He studied with Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī, Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, and Sirāj al-Dīn al-Balqīnī. He followed the Shafi'ī School of law. He excelled at the religious sciences, especially the science of ḥadīth, and earned the title of *Amīr al-Mu'minīn fī al- Ḥadīth*. He has the most famous commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Imam Bukhārī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*. He died in the year 852. See: Introduction to Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, (Dār al-Fikr: 1995/1415)

IBN ATHĪR: He is Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr. He was one of most prominent and influential Arab historians. His most famous work is *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* ("The Complete History"). He resided for a time in Mosul, and was a soldier in the army of Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī in Syria. He later lived in Aleppo and in Damascus. Ibn al-Athīr was actually the family name of three brothers who were all famous Arabian philologists. The eldest of them was Majd al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr, and the youngest of them was Diyā al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr, one of the most famous aesthetic and stylistic critics in Arabian literature. The brother best known by the simple name of Ibn Athīr was Abū al- Ḥasan 'Izz al-Dīn Muhammad ibn al-Athīr. He died in the year 631.

IBN 'AQĪL: He is Abū al-Wafā' 'Alī Ibn 'Aqīl Ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Aqīl Ibn Aḥmad al-Baghdādī, the Ḥanbalī jurist and mystic who attempted to incorporate liberal theological ideas into the Ḥanbalī tradition. For this, he became the subject of rebuke by many of his comrades. Despite this, he was still considered one of the greatest of the Ḥanbalī scholars in their history. He died in the year 513. See: Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (8/322-323).

Ibn Ḥazm: He is Abū Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Sa'id ibn Ḥazm, the scholar of Cordova, Islamic Spain. Ibn Ḥazm was raised in a house of nobility and affluence, having been the son of a minister of the government. His early years of study were centered on poetry and philology, and he did not begin an in-depth study of law until he reached the age of 26. At this time, he adopted the *madhhab* of Imam Shafi'ī and used to dissuade people from following the school of Imām Mālik, the official school at the time, due to the support he saw some Mālikī scholars giving to the ruling class of Spain. Shortly after becoming a Shafi'ī, he adopted the Literalists School of Imam Dāwūd al-Zāhirī. Ibn Kathīr says of him, "Ibn Ḥazm was much in his assailing—with his tongue and his pen—of the scholars who would go against the sound ḥadīths. So that produced rancor in the hearts of the people of his time. And it remained as such until they made him hated in the eyes of the kings. For that reason, they banished him from his country until his death in one of his villages on the second of Sha'bān of this year (456) while he had exceeded 90. And there is utter amazement at how he could be a Literalist (Zāhirī) confused about legal matters (*furū'*). He did not accept any form of legal analogy (*qiyās*), neither the clear form (*jalī*) nor any other. And this is what lowered his stature in the eyes of the scholars, and brought upon him great error in the way he saw things and how he behaved. Despite this, he was the most fervent of those who indulged in interpretation (*ta'wīl*) in matters of creed (*usūl*), the attribute verses (*āyāt al-Sifāt*), and the attribute ḥadīths, because he initially delved deeply into logic. He learned it from Muḥammad ibn al- Ḥasan al-Madhkajī al-Kannānī al-Qurtubī. Ibn Mākūlā and Ibn Khallikān mentioned him, may God, Exalted in Highness, have mercy on him. So his case in the area of the attributes was corrupted because of that." See: Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (8/220) also refer to the introduction to *al-Mu ḥ allā* (1/5-10) Dār al-Fikr: 1984

IBN KATHĪR: He is 'Imād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr ibn Daw', the Shāfi'ī ḥadīth Master (Ḥāfiz), scholar, and historian. His lineage is traced back to the tribe of Quraysh. He is most famous for his exegesis of the Qur'ān entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* ("Explanation of the Magnificent Qu'rān"). Among his shaykhs are Ḥāfiz Dhahabī, and Ḥāfiz al-Mizzī, the author of *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā al-Rijāl.* He also studied with Shaykh Ibn Taymiyya. He died in the year 774. See: Ibn Kathir, Introduction to *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (1/7-9) Dār al-Fikr:1998/1419.

IBN TAYMIYYA: He is Abū al-'Abbās Taqī al-Dīn A ḥmad ibn Taymiyya, best known by the title of Shaykh al-Islām. He was one of the most controversial figures in the history of Islam due to his opinions regarding doctrine and his unwavering stance against innovation. He was accused of heresy by many scholars, and praised by others—both his friends and enemies alike—due to the profundity of his knowledge and the sharpness of his wit. Ibn Kathīr says about him, "And in general, he, may God show him mercy, was one of the outstanding scholars, of those who errs (sometimes) and is correct (at others). But his error by comparison with his correctness is like a dot in an expanded and fathomless sea. Likewise, his error(s) are forgivable in light of what has come in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī: 'When the learned (*Ḥākim*) person exerts his self and is correct, he has two rewards. And when he exerts his self and errs, he has one reward.' So he is rewarded. And Imām Mālik ibn Anas said, 'Every individual, what he says is taken and forsaken, except for the owner of this tomb.'" There were also some scholars who believed that Imām ibn Taymiyya reached the status of *mujtahid.* Ibn Kathīr mentions, "I found in the handwriting of Ibn al-Zamlakānī that he said: 'The conditions of *ijtihād* were brought together in their appropriate fashion with respect to him.'" He died in the year 728. See: Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (9/387-393)

IMĀM AḤMED IBN ḤANBAL: He is Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal ibn Hilāl ibn Asad ibn Idrīs, the Imām of *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a*. At the start of his scholastic career he was a pupil of Imām Abū Yūsuf, but would later turn his attention to ḥadīth beginning at the age of 16. Imām Aḥmad was well known for his scrupulousness, his indifference toward the world, and his strong objection to indulging in matters of speculative theology and legal analogy in a general sense. Consequently, he was persecuted at the hands of some of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs due to his unwavering refusal to kowtow to their insistence that he proclaim that the Qur'ān was created and that it was impossible for God to be seen in the afterlife. Abū Zur'a stated that Imam Aḥmad memorized one million ḥadīths. He died in the year 241. See: Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (7/339-359).

IMĀM AL-BAYHAQĪ: He is Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Mūsā, the famous Shāfi'ī ḥadīth Master (Ḥāfiz), and author of splendid works like, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā, al-Asmā wa al-Sifāt, Shu'ab al-Īmān*, and other works. He was born in Khusrawjird, one of the villages of Bayhaq. Bayhaq is the name given to a number of villages found on the outskirts of Nisapur. The most notable of all his many shaykhs is Imam Ḥākim al-Nīsāpūrī, the author of the famed *al-Mustadrak 'alā al- Ṣaḥīḥayn.* He died in the year 458. See: Dhahabī, *Tabaqāt al-Ḥuffāz,* and the introduction to Bayhaqi's *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān li al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī,* (Dār I ḥyā al-'Ulūm: 1990/1410)

IMĀM AL-SHĀFI'Ī: He is Muḥammad ibn Idrīs ibn al-'Abbās ibn 'Uthmān ibn Shāfi', the famous scholar, legal theorist, and jurisprudent, with no need for any introduction. He is of noble lineage due to his direct descent from the Prophet's family by way of 'Abd Manāf. He was declared by many as being the Renewer of the faith of the third century. He is considered to be the first scholar to codify the legal principles and methodology of Islamic scriptural interpretation and reconciliation, which are comprised in his famous book, *al-Risāla.* He died in the year 204. See: Bayhaqī, *Manāqib al-Shāfi'ī* (1/77).

IMĀM SHAWKĀNĪ: He is Abū 'Alī Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al- Ḥasan, the famous Imām of the latter days, born in the village of Shawkān, located in the country of Yemen. He was raised in the city of San'ā in a household of learning and virtue. He spent most of his scholarly life as an adherent to the legal school of the Zaydī Shiites until he claimed the right to exercise independent judgment (*ijtihād*), and wrote his famous book condemning adherence to one of the schools of the legal theorists and scholars of Islam entitled, *al-Qawl al-Mufīd fī Adilla al-Ijtihād wa al-Taqlīd* ("The Useful Pronouncement Regarding the Proofs of *Ijtihād* and *Taqlīd*"). The comrades of his legal school (Zaydīs) severely scrutinized his claim of *ijtihād* and accused him of seeking to destroy the *madhhab* of the House of Prophethood (*Ahl al-Bayt)*, but Shawkānī did not waver from his stance.

Imām Shawkānī is best known for his compendium of law entitled *Nayl al-Awtār* ("Achieving the Objectives"), which was written after leaving the Zaydī School of law. He has also written a famous work on Islamic Legal Theory entitled *Irshād al-Fusūl ilā Taḥqīq al-Ḥaqq min 'ilm al-Usūl* ("Directing the Stallions to the Realization of the Truth about the Knowledge of Legal Theory"). He died in the year 1250. See: Introduction to *Irshād al-Fusūl* (1/9-29) Dar al-Kutbī: 1992/1413.

IMĀM AL-SUYŪTĪ: He is 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Khidrī, the Shāfi'ī Imām, Ḥāfiz, historian, philologist, and expert in a great many other things whose ancient lineage goes back to Persia. He is one of the most prolific writers in the history of Islam having composed at least 700 works pertaining to the various Islamic disciplines. It is said that there is almost no topic that Suyūtī did not write about. One of his specialties was documenting the reports about the Prophetic medical remedies supported by the comments made by the various physicians of his age and before. Imam Suyūtī was born in Cairo, Egypt, and was best known for his writings on the discipline of ḥadīth. One of the most prominent of his shaykhs was no other than Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqlānī. He died in the year 911. See: Jalāl al-Suyūtī, *al-Majlis al-'Alā, Ḥusn al-Muḥādara,* and Introduction to *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*

RĀĠHIB AL-ASFAHĀNĪ: He is Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Mufaddal, the Ash'arī grammarian, al-Rāġhib al-Asfahānī. His most famous work is his *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. He died in the year 402.

SHIHĀB AL-ALŪSĪ: He is Abū al-Thanā Shihāb al-Dīn Mamūd al-Alūsī, one of great Muftis and scholars of the mid-19th century (CE) Baġhdad who served under Ottoman rule. He is most famous for his authorship of one of the most authoritative Qur'ānic exegeses, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm wa al-Sab al-Mathānī,* ("The Spirit of the Meanings regarding the Explanation of the Magnificent Qur'ān and the Seven Off-Repeated Verses"). He had three sons who would become scholars: Nu'mān Khayr al-Dīn, Abdullāh, and Mahmūd Shukrī. Nu'mān became one of the most influential *Salafī* scholars of the 19th century. His brother, Abdullāh, would become a great scholar with strong Sufi tendencies, and Shukrī would later become a highly regarded member of the growing *Salafī* circles in the major Arab urban centers at the beginning of the 20th century. Shihāb al-Alusi died in the year 1854 CE

Ustādh Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849-1905 CE): He is: Muḥammad 'Abduh was considered one of the controversial religious and political reformers of Egypt during the 19th century. He was the pupil of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afġhānī of Iran (1839-1897 CE), and the mentor of Muhammad Rashīd Ridā of Syria (1865-1935 CE). He was the founder of the *Salafiyya* movement in Egypt, which has evolved much today to be an ultra-conservative movement, despite being much more liberal at its inception. 'Abduh served on the Azhar University administrative council as well as the Shaykh of Azhar for a time. His very anti-Western attitudes changed once he was released from the prisons of the British occupiers after enduring torture. See: al-Būtī, Muḥammad Sa'id Ramadān, *Salafiyya: Mar ḥala Zamaniyya Mubāraka, Lā Madhhab Islāmī,* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1418/1998), pp. 131-137

Zamakhsharī: He is Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Abū al-Qāsim, the author of the well-acclaimed linguistic exegesis of the Qur'ān entitled *al-Kashshāf* ("The Grand Revealer"). He also authored many other useful works like his *al-Mufassal* ("The Detailed") on the subject of Arabic grammar. He, like earlier scholars, traveled the land in search of knowledge, and resided in Makkah for a period. He professed to be a Muʿtazilite and used to debate others in defense of the Muʿtazilite principles and doctrine. He died in Khawārzim on the night of ʿArafa at the age of 79 in the year 538 See: Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (8/360) Dār al-Fikr: 1998/1419

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